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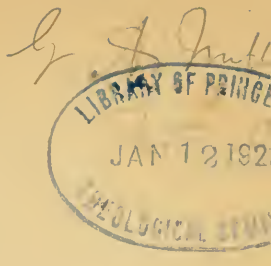

WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D. F.L.S.

IN SIX VOLUMES

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G Anderson Miller

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THE ROYAL PREACHER:

LECTURES ON ECCLESIASTES.

PREFACE.

In the form of translations, expositions, and literary parallels, there is now connected with each book of the Bible a very extensive authorship; and we might fill a little volume with a historical review of the illustrations of Ecclesiastes, from the Commentary of Jerome to the illuminated edition of Owen Jones.

Jerome tells us that his work originated in an effort to bring over to the monastic life a young Roman lady, Blesilla. This object gives an ascetic tone to every chapter, and many of his interpretations are so fanciful that alongside of them any modern Cocceius would be deemed sober and literal. For instance, applying to the Saviour the language of the second chapter, the "slaves," or men-servants there mentioned, he thinks are Christians afflicted with the spirit of bondage; the "great and small cattle," are the simpletons and drudges of the Church—its "sheep and oxen," who, without exerting their reason or studying the Scriptures, do as they are bidden, but are not entitled to rank as men, etc. His own reason the learned Father freely exercised in his scriptural studies; and he takes care to apprise his readers that his version

is the result of his independent research.[1] For this he has been curiously rewarded. The Council of Trent has declared his version "authentic," and has virtually decreed that henceforth Jerome's private judgment must be the judgment of Christendom. The most painful thing in his writings is the tone of litigious infelicity by which they are pervaded. It is a sort of formic acid which flows from the finger-points, not of our good Father alone, but of a whole class of divines; and, like the red marks left by the feet of ants on litmus paper, it discolours all his pages. But although we cannot subscribe to every rendering of the Latin Vulgate, and must demur to its author's principles of interpretation as well as his spirit, the zeal and industry of Jerome, and the curious information which he has transmitted, must always secure for his name a prominent place in the history of Biblical literature.

To the monk of Bethlehem, we have a curious contrast in Martin Luther. "Fathers and doctors have grievously erred in supposing that in this book Solomon taught contempt of the world, as they call it, meaning thereby contempt of things ordained and created. The creatures are good enough, but it is man and man's notions which Solomon pronounces vanity. But his expounders, forsooth! make it out that the creatures are the vanity, and that they themselves and their dreams are the only solidity! And thus from the Divine gold of our author they have forged their own abominable idols." And then, in that spirit of genial life-enjoyment with which the "Table

[1] "Nullius autoritatem secutus sum;" "nec contra conscientiam meam, fonte veritatis omisso, opinionum rivulos consectarer."

Talk" and Merle D'Aubigné's History have made us so familiar, he states it as the true scope of Ecclesiastes: "Solomon wishes to make us tranquil in the ordinary ongoings and accidents of this existence, neither afraid of future days nor covetous of remote possessions;[1] as St. Paul says, 'careful for nothing.'" And then in a strain very different from that which sought to decoy Blesilla into a convent, and like the uncaged captive, which he really was, the Saxon swan[2] goes on to celebrate the joys of Christian liberty.

Since that period, versions and commentaries have appeared, sufficient to store a little library. In one thing they all agree. They all allow that Ecclesiastes contains many things hard to be understood. "Mea sententia inter omnia sacra scripta liber longe obscurissimus," says Mercer, the learned Hebrew professor in Paris University; "Le plus difficile de tous les livres de l'Ecriture," re-echoes his still more learned countryman, Calmet. "Of all the Hebrew writings, none present greater obstacles to the expositor," is the preliminary remark of one of the most intelligent English translators, G. Holden; and even German clairvoyance acknowledges "Finsterniss" and "Dunkelheit." "Zwar hat das Licht der neuern Exegese die dunkle Wolke zertheilt, aber sie doch noch nicht in völlige Klarheit aufgelöst," was the confession of Umbreit thirty years ago, and it is still repeated by most of his critical successors.

[1] "Sine cura et cupiditate futurorum."

[2] Luther's crest was a swan, as those will remember who recall the narrative of Huss's martyrdom.

Not to enumerate the older works of Des Vœux (1760), L. Holden (1764), and Hodgson (1790), and the well-arranged and scholar-like publication of G. Holden (1822), two very good English translations of Ecclesiastes have lately appeared. Of these the most elaborate is by the Rev. T. Preston, of Cambridge, and is accompanied by the ingenious Commentary of Rabbi Mendlessohn (1845). The other, by Dr. Noyes of Boston, U.S. (1846), with less show of erudition, is clear and straightforward; but, like Mendlessohn, the American professor gives to the book an air of theological tenuity and mere worldly wisdom, which carries neither our conviction nor our sympathy.

In the *Presbyterian Review* (Edinburgh) for October 1846, there was inserted a brief but interesting paper on this book, ascribed, we believe correctly, to our friend, the Rev. A. A. Bonar. Full of fine fancy and delicate insight, its only fault is its shortness; and although we have taken another view of the book's purport and ground-plan, we could wish that its text were illustrated by a mind so rich in Eastern lore and Christian experience.

Our own labours were nearly ended before there came into our hands the *Biblical Repository* (New York) for April 1850, containing a lecture by Professor Stowe of Cincinnati. The plan of Ecclesiastes, as given by this ingenious expositor, is so nearly akin to that which will be found in the subsequent pages, that we feel bound to transcribe it:—"The method of the writer is the most vivid and effective that can be conceived. Instead of describing the various processes of thought and feeling

through which Solomon passed in the course of his eventful life, the whole heart of the king is taken out and held up before our eyes, with everything it contains, both good and bad. The secret chambers of his soul are thrown open, and we see every thought and feeling as it arises in the mind, and in the exact shape in which it first presents itself, without any of those modifications by which men soften down the harder features of their first thoughts before they give them utterance to their fellow-men." "Solomon, . . . seeking happiness in the things of earth, . . . is disappointed and disgusted; and instead of repenting of his errors, he becomes dissatisfied with the arrangements of Providence, misanthropic, and sceptical. His conscience, however, is not entirely asleep, but occasionally interposes to check his murmurings and reprove him for his follies. In this state of mind he is introduced, and in the character of Koheleth gives full and strong utterance to all his feelings. Hence, inconsistent statements and wrong sentiments are to be expected in the progress of the discourse; and it is not till the close of the book that all his errors are corrected, and he comes to 'the conclusion of the whole matter,' a humbled, penitent, believing, religious man."

Of those older commentators who are hortatory rather than explanatory, Reynolds is by far the best. The *Homilies* of Thomas Cartwright, and the *Expositions* of Granger (1621), Cotton (1654), and Nisbet (1694), contain many pious and useful reflections; but they are not likely to find many modern readers. In our own day Dr. Wardlaw has published two volumes of Lectures, which are

distinguished by richly scriptural illustration and faithful enforcement of truth on the conscience, conveyed in language remarkable for its perspicuity and elegance, and which, we hope, are destined long to contribute to the instruction and comfort of the Christian Church.

Two poetical paraphrases of Ecclesiastes have been written by authors whose opposite fortunes are striking illustrations of their theme. One is entitled, "The Design of part of the Book of Ecclesiastes: or, the Unreasonableness of Men's Restless Contentions for the Present Enjoyments, represented in an English Poem."[1] It was the maiden effort of William Wollaston, afterwards sufficiently known through *The Religion of Nature Delineated.* He published it in all the gaiety of his spirits, when, from being an ill-paid schoolmaster, he found himself suddenly the heir of a rich kinsman, and when, with his newly-married wife, also an heiress, he had settled in a handsome house, and surrounded himself with a splendid library in Charter House Square. The other is "Choheleth: or, the Royal Preacher. A Poetical Paraphrase of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Printed for J. Wallis, at Yorick's Head, Ludgate Street, 1768." It was probably written within a few yards of Wollaston's former mansion; for its author

[1] London, 1691. It is anonymous; but the Preface is signed "W. W." It is now very rare. The author afterwards wished to suppress it.—See *Biogr. Brit.* 4304.

Amongst other bibliographical curiosities connected with this portion of Scripture may be mentioned, "King Solomon his Solace. Containing (among many thinges of right worthy request) King Solomon his Politie, his true Repentance, and finally his Salvation. [By John Carpenter.] London, 1606." It is a dialogue between Zadoc and Solomon's chief lords, filling a black-letter quarto. It is quaint and ingenious; but owing to its tediousness, its rarity is neither to be wondered at nor regretted.

died a pensioner in the Charter House, January 1795, aged eighty-eight years. "He was at the time of the earthquake a considerable merchant at Lisbon, and narrowly escaped with his life, after seeing all his property swallowed up. Some time after his arrival in England he lost his eyesight, when her Majesty was pleased to give him her warrant for the comfortable asylum he enjoyed till his death. He was well versed in different languages, and was the author of several detached publications."[1] What an example of the "time to get and the time to lose!" The fagged schoolmaster transformed in a few months into the full-blown gentleman, and admitted to courtly circles with his beautiful heiress; and the prosperous merchant seeing his wealth in a moment engulfed by the earth whence it came, and then losing the eyes that beheld it, and thankful for a home in a public hospital! Brodick's Paraphrase indicates considerable poetical talent, and is so good an expansion of the original that the Commentary of the learned Dr. Adam Clarke, in a great measure, consists of extracts from it. On the score of neither versification nor fidelity is Wollaston's poem entitled to equal praise; and by treating Solomon as a satirist he has evidently misapprehended his character; but as the book is now seldom seen, we may give a short sample of the opening chapter:—

[1] From a MS. note appended to our copy of "Choheleth." We have not been able to find any notice of Brodick in print. His paraphrase was reprinted at Whitchurch, Salop (1824), "with Supplementary Notes, by Nathaniel Higgins;" but the editor does not appear to have known even the name of his author.

"Here Mocher bustles in a thronged shop,
That swallows all his hours to feed his hope;
And pants, by business elbow'd every way,
Within the narrow limits of the day.
There sails a Tyrian by some distant star,
Bolder than fits of men in deep despair:
While Iccar keeps within his native sphere,
Always at home, yet too a traveller:
For daily tramping o'er his spacious fields,
He views their state, and what each of them yields;
O'erlooks his flocks, o'erlooks his men, that plough,
Or (his own emblem) corn and fodder now;
While sweat, the curse, that vanquish'd all our race,
In pearly drops does triumph on his face.
But oh, that here the catalogue might close!
For still worse ends men to themselves propose;
And still worse roads to reach their goals they choose.
Methinks I see the crafty Gilonite,
Broke from the cords of duty and of right,
Within his study (forge of treasons) sit,
And scratching prompt his head, and stir his wit;
Seeking through policy and state essays
Himself, though by his master's fall, to raise.
While Absalom (what pity 't should be he!)
The fairest youth e'er blotted family,
A more compendious rebel strives to be;
Through David's and his father's breast would bore
A purple passage to the sovereign power."

An effort of a much higher order than either of the above is Prior's "Solomon." However, being neither a paraphrase nor an independent poem, but a monologue composed of materials which Ecclesiastes supplies, wit, learning, and melodious verse fail to sustain the interest of the huge soliloquy through its three successive books.[1]

[1] Perhaps the best metrical version of the book is the one contained in the *Divine Poems* of George Sandys (1638), better known as one of our early Eastern travellers.

And we are inclined to think that the spirit of our author has been as happily caught and his design as successfully carried out by sundry productions which neither profess to translate nor to imitate him. Among these literary parallels we would name Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes;* Hannah More's *Search after Happiness;* and Tennyson's *Two Voices;* and above all, *Rasselas.*[1] May we not add the sadly beautiful *Consolatio Philosophiæ,* in which the last of the Romans has given us everything except the grand conclusion?

Having gone over two books of the New Testament, the author selected Ecclesiastes as the subject of a congregational exposition. He chose it because it is a book of the Old Testament, and because it is peculiarly adapted to the present wistful and restless times. He also hoped that its illustration might promote, especially among the younger members of his flock, the intelligent and expectant study of the sacred Scriptures. With a similar hope he now publishes a portion of those Lectures.[2] The space which it would occupy has compelled him to forego any attempt at a continuous commentary, and he has felt constrained to omit many important texts; but he trusts that the friendly reader may be able to glean a few of the Royal Preacher's lessons from the following fragments; and he is sure that in gratitude for brevity every reader

[1] "The first sentence of Rasselas would serve equally well as an introduction to Ecclesiastes:—'Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow, attend,'" etc.—PROF. STOWE.

[2] The series extended to forty discourses, of which the half are not published, most of them somewhat condensed.

will forgive an occasional abruptness. And although he cannot claim the attention of the theologian, yet he trusts that the following hints may assist some readers, who, revering the Word of God, regret that they peruse it with languid interest or imperfect understanding.

In order to economize space, the passages on which the following discourses are founded are not printed in full: but, before beginning any lecture, the reader is earnestly requested to give a careful perusal to the entire text, as he will find it in the Bible.

In a former Edition, the first of the following Lectures was omitted: it has again been inserted in deference to the request of several friends, who expressed a wish for its restoration. Something of the sort is, perhaps, required by way of introduction; but, on reading it again, the author cannot help feeling that the style is too figurative, and, could he have brought his mind to the irksome task of re-writing, he would gladly have substituted another discourse more in unison with the rest of the series.

I.

THE PREACHER.

"I the Preacher was King over Israel in Jerusalem."—ECCLES. I. 12.

THERE is no season of the year so exquisite as the first full burst of Summer: when east winds lose their venom, and the firmament its April fickleness; when the trees are thick with foliage, and under them the turf is tender; when, before going to sleep, the blackbird wakes the nightingale, and night itself is only a softer day; when the dog-star has not withered a single flower, nor the mower's scythe touched one; but all is youth and freshness, novelty and hope—as if our very earth had become a bud, of which only another Eden could be the blossom—as if, on wings of blossom, through an atmosphere of balm, existence itself were floating onward to some bright Sabbatic haven on the shores of Immortality.

With the Hebrew commonwealth, it was such a season. Over all the Holy Land there rested a blissful serenity—the calm which follows when successful war is crowned with conquest—a calm which was only stirred by the proud joy of possession, and then hallowed and intensified again by the sense of Jehovah's favour. And amidst this calm the monarch was enshrined, at once its source and its

symbol. In the morning he held his levée in his splendid Basilica—a pillared hall a hundred cubits long.[1] As he sat aloft on his lion-sculptured throne, he received petitions and heard appeals, and astonished his subjects by astute decisions and weighty apophthegms, till every case was disposed of, and the toils of kingcraft ended. Meanwhile, his chariot was waiting in the square; and with disdainful hoofs, the light coursers pawed the pavement, impatient for their master; whilst, drawn up on either side, purple squadrons held the ground, and their champing chargers tossed from their flowing manes a dust of gold.[2] And now, a stir in the crowd—the straining of necks and the jingle of horse-gear announce the acme of expectation; and, preceded by the tall panoply of the commander-in-chief, and followed by a dazzling retinue, there emerges from the palace, and there ascends the chariot, a noble form, arrayed in white and in silver, and crowned with a golden coronet; and the welkin rings, "God save the King!" for this is Solomon in all his glory. And, as through the Bethlehem gate, and adown the level causeway, the bickering chariot speeds, the vines on either side of the valley "give a good smell,"[3] and it is a noble sight to look back to yonder marble fane and princely mansions which rear their snowy cliffs over the capital's new ramparts. It is a noble sight, this rural comfort and that civic opulence—for they evince the abundance of peace and the abundance of righteousness. And when, through

[1] See 1 Kings vii.; Josephus' *Antiq.* Bk. viii. chap. 5-7; and Fergusson's *Palaces of Nineveh Restored* (1851), pp. 225-232.

[2] Josephus' *Antiq.* Bk. viii. chap. 7.

[3] Song of Solomon ii. 13.

orchards and corn-fields, the progress ends, the shouting concourse of the capital is exchanged for the delights of an elysian hermitage. After visiting his far-come favourites —the "apes and the peacocks"—the bright birds and curious quadrupeds which share his retirement; after wandering along the terraces, where under the ripening pomegranates roses of Sharon blossom, and watching the ponds where fishes bask amid the water-lilies—we can imagine him retiring from the sunshine into that grotto which fed these reservoirs from its "fountain sealed;" or in the spacious parlour, whose fluttering lattice cooled, and whose cedar wainscot perfumed the flowing summer, sitting down to indite a poem, in which celestial love should overmaster and replace the earthly passion which supplied its imagery. With colours rich as the rainbow, and with materials furnished by his own felicity, this Prince of Peace consigned to the self-illuminated page, that Song of Songs which is Solomon's.

It was June in Hebrew history—the top-tide of a nation's happiness. Sitting, like an empress, between the Eastern and Western oceans, the navies of three continents poured their treasures at her feet; and, awed by her commanding name, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah brought spontaneous tributes of spice, and silver, and precious stones. To build her palaces, the shaggy brows of Lebanon had been scalped of their cedars, and Ophir had bled its richest gold. At the magical voice of the Sovereign, fountains, native to distant hills, rippled down the slopes of Zion; and miraculous cities, like Palmyra, started up from the sandy waste. And whilst peace,

and commerce, and the law's protection, made gold like brass, and silver shekels like stones of the street, Palestine was a halcyon-nest suspended betwixt the calm wave and the warm sky; Jerusalem was a royal infant, whose silken cradle soft winds rock high up on a castle tower: all was serene magnificence and opulent security.

You have seen a blight in summer. The sky is overcast, and yet there are no clouds; nothing but a dry and stifling obscuration—as if the mouth of some pestilent volcano had opened, or as if sulphur mingled with the sunbeams. "The beasts groan; the cattle are oppressed." From the trees the embryo fruits and the remaining blossoms fall in an unnoticed shower, and the foliage curls and crumples. And whilst creation looks disconsolate, in the hedgerows the heavy moths begin to flutter, and ominous owlets cry from the ruin. Such a blight came over the Hebrew summer. By every calculation it ought to have been high noon; but the sun no longer smiled on Israel's dial. There was a dark discomfort in the air. The people murmured. The monarch wheeled along with greater pomp than ever; but the popular prince had soured into the despot, and the crown sat defiant on his moody brow; and stiff were the obeisances, heartless the hosannas, which hailed him as he passed. The ways of Zion mourned; and whilst grass was sprouting in the temple-courts, mysterious groves and impious shrines were rising everywhere; and whilst lust defiled the palace, Chemosh and Ashtaroth, and other Gentile abominations, defiled the Holy Land. And in the disastrous eclipse

beasts of the forest crept abroad. From his lurking-place in Egypt Hadad ventured out, and became a life-long torment to the God-forsaken monarch. And Rezin pounced on Damascus, and made Syria his own. And from the pagan palaces of Thebes and Memphis harsh cries were heard ever and anon, Pharaoh and Jeroboam taking counsel together, screeching forth their threatenings, and hooting insults, at which Solomon could laugh no longer. For amidst all the gloom and misery a message comes from God: the kingdom is rent; and whilst Solomon's successor will only have a fag-end and a fragment, by right Divine ten tribes are handed over to a rebel and a runaway.

What led to Solomon's apostasy? And what, again, was the ulterior effect of that apostasy on himself? As to the origin of his apostasy the Word of God is explicit. He did not obey his own maxim. He ceased to rejoice with the wife of his youth; and loving many strangers, they drew his heart away from God. Luxury and sinful attachments made him an idolater, and idolatry made him yet more licentious; until, in the lazy enervation and languid day-dreaming of the Sybarite, he lost the perspicacity of the sage, and the prowess of the sovereign; and when he woke up from the tipsy swoon, and out of the kennel picked his tarnished diadem, he woke to find his faculties, once so clear and limpid, all perturbed, his strenuous reason paralysed, and his healthful fancy poisoned. He woke to find the world grown hollow, and himself grown old. He woke to see the sun bedarkened in Israel's sky, and a special gloom encompassing himself.

He woke to recognise all round a sadder sight than winter—a blasted summer. Like a deluded Samson starting from his slumber, he sought to recall that noted wisdom which had signalized his Nazarite days; but its locks were shorn; and, cross and self-disgusted, wretched and guilty, he woke up to the discovery which awaits the sated sensualist: he found that when the beast gets the better of the man, the man is abandoned by his God. Like one who falls asleep amidst the lights and music of an orchestra, and who awakes amidst empty benches and tattered programmes—like a man who falls asleep in a flower-garden, and who opens his eyes on a bald and locust-blackened wilderness,—the life, the loveliness, was vanished, and all the remaining spirit of the mighty Solomon yawned forth that verdict of the tired voluptuary: "Vanity of vanities! vanity of vanities! all is vanity!"

II.

THE SERMON.

"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, King of Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."—ECCLES. I. 1, 2.

THERE are some books of the Bible which can only be read with thorough profit when once you have found the key. Luther somewhere tells us, that he used to be greatly damped by an expression in the outset of the Epistle to the Romans. The apostle says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed." By "righteousness," Luther understood the justice of God—His attribute of moral rectitude; and so understanding it, he could scarcely see the superiority of the Gospel over the Law, and, at all events, his troubled conscience could find no comfort in it. But when at last it was revealed to him that the term here alludes not to an attribute of God, but to the atonement of Immanuel—that it means not justice, but God's justifying righteousness—the righteousness which God incarnate wrought out, and which is imputed to the sinner believing—the whole epistle was lit up with a joyful illumination; and

the context and many other passages which used to look so dark and hostile, at once "leaped up and fondled" him with friendly recognition; and to Luther ever after the Gospel was glorious as the revelation and the vehicle to the sinner of a righteousness Divine. To take another instance: many read the Book of Job as if every verse were equally the utterance of Jehovah; and they quote the sayings of Bildad and Zophar as the mind of the Most High; entirely forgetting the avowed structure of the book—forgetting that through five-and-thirty chapters the several collocutors are permitted to reason and wrangle, and "darken counsel by words without knowledge," in order to make the contrast more striking, when at last Jehovah breaks silence and vindicates His own procedure. But when you advert to its real structure—when you group the different elements of its poetic painting—when, under the canopy of a dark cloud, you see the patriarch cowering, and his three friends assailing him with calumnious explanations of his sore affliction; but above that cloud you see Jehovah listening to His loyal servant, and to his pious, but narrow-minded neighbours—listening with a look of fatherly fondness, and from heaven's cornucopia[1] ready to shower on His servant's head the most overwhelming of vindications—the blessings twice repeated, which Satan snatched away; when you see this, and when you know that Jehovah is to be the last speaker, instead of nervously striving to torture into truths the mistakes of Bildad and Zophar, and of Job himself, you feel that their mistakes are as natural and as needful to

[1] Job xlii. 14, Keren-happuch: *i.e.*, Horn of Plenty.

the plan of the book, as are all the cross-purposes and contradictory colloquies of a well-constructed drama. And when so understood, you feel that, all the rather because of the misconceptions of the human speakers, the book is eloquent with Divine vindication, and teaches what Cowper sings so touchingly :—

> "Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> In blessings on your head.
>
> Blind unbelief is sure to err,
> And scan His work in vain;
> God is His own interpreter,
> And He will make it plain."

Perhaps no portion of Holy Writ more needs a key than the subject of our lecture. On the one hand, Ecclesiastes has always been a favourite book with Infidels. It was a manual with that coarse scoffer, Frederick the Great of Prussia; and both Volney and Voltaire appeal to it in support of their sceptical philosophy. Nor can it be denied that it contains many sentiments at seeming variance with the general purport of the Word of God. "Be not righteous overmuch; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." "There is a time for everything. What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?" "As the beast dieth, so dieth man. Do not both go to one place?" "A man hath no better thing than to eat and drink and be merry." These texts, and many like them, are quoted by the

moralists of expediency; by the fatalist, the materialist, the Pyrrhonist, the epicure.

On the other hand, many able commentators have laboured hard to harmonize such passages with the sayings of Scripture; I may add, they have laboured hard to harmonize them with other sayings of Solomon, and other passages of this selfsame book. But I cannot help thinking they have laboured in vain. For the moment, and when reading or listening to some eloquent exposition, you may persuade yourself that such texts are, after all, only peculiar and paradoxical ways of putting important truths; but when Procrustes has withdrawn his pressure, and the reluctant sentence has escaped from the screw and lever, it bounds up elastic, and looks as strange and ungainly as ever. Accordingly, others have met the difficulty by suggesting that, like Canticles, Ecclesiastes is a dialogue; and into the mouth of an imaginary objector, they put every sentiment which they deem unsuitable to an inspired penman. For such interpellations, however, there is no foundation in the context, where nothing is more obvious than the continuous identity of the speaker; and, like another exegetical stratagem which would invert the meaning of such passages by turning them into interrogatories, you feel that it is a clever evasion rather than a conclusive solution.[1] You would prefer a straightforward

[1] As specimens of the interrogatory subterfuge, the reader may compare with the original or with the authorized version the following:—"Shall there then be no remembrance of past or future events? Shall there be no memorial of them among those who shall come after us?"—i. 11. "For cannot that which is crooked be made straight? Cannot that which is wanting be supplied?"—i. 15. "Shall I therefore hate life, because anything wrought under the sun becomes a grievance unto me? Shall I hate all my

exposition which would maintain the unity of the book and the analogy of Scripture, whilst taking the words as they stand.

This is the sentence with which Ecclesiastes closes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." This is the conclusion of the matter, and a wise and wholesome conclusion, worthy of Him who said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." But what is the "matter" of which this is the "conclusion"? To ascertain this we must go back to the beginning. There you read, "I the preacher was king in Jerusalem, and I gave my heart to search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. Then I said in my heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure," etc. In other words, you find that this "matter" was a long experiment, which the narrator made in search of the Supreme Felicity, and of which Ecclesiastes records the successive stages. But how does it record them? By virtually repeating them. In the exercise of his poetic power the historian conveys himself and his reader back into those days of vanity, and feels anew all that he felt then; so that, in the course of his rapid monologue, he stands before us, by turns the man of science and the man of pleasure, the fatalist, the material-

labour which I take under the sun, because I must sometime leave it to the man who shall succeed me?"—ii. 17, 18.—(Barham's *Corrected Translation*.) Surely the sense is too feeble to justify such a forced construction.

ist, the sceptic, the epicurean, and the stoic, with a few earnest and enlightened interludes; till, in the conclusion of the whole matter, he sloughs the last of all these "lying vanities," and emerges to our view, a man in his right mind—a believer and a penitent.

This we regard as the true idea of the book. We would describe it as a dramatic biography, in which Solomon not only records but re-enacts the successive scenes of his search after happiness; a descriptive memoir, in which he not only recites his past experience, but in his improvising fervour becomes the various phases of his former self once more. He is a restored backslider, and for the benefit of his son and his subjects, and—under the guidance of God's Spirit—for the benefit of the Church, he writes this prodigal's progress. He is a returned pilgrim from the land of Nod, and as he opens the portfolio of sketches which he took before his eyes were turned away from viewing vanity, he accompanies them with lively and realizing repetitions of what he felt and thought during those wild and joyless days. Our great Edmund Burke once said that his own life might be best divided into "fyttes" or "manias:" that his life began with a fit poetical, followed by a fit metaphysical, and that again by a fit rhetorical; that he once had a mania for statesmanship, and that this again had subsided into the mania of philosophical seclusion. And so in his days of apostasy, the soul intense of Solomon launched out into a fit of study, succeeded by a fit of luxury. He had fits of grossness and refinement, a mania of conviviality, a mania of misanthropy. He had a fit of building, a fit of science, a

fit of book-making; and they all passed off in collapses of disappointment and paroxysms of downright misery. And here, as he exhibits these successive *tableaux*, these facsimiles of his former self, like a modern bard on St. Cecilia's Day, he runs the diapason of departed passion, and in the successive strophes and antistrophes, he feels his former frenzies over again, in order that, by the very vividness of the representation, we may be all the better "admonished."[1]

"The preacher was king over Israel, and, because he was wise, he taught the people knowledge. He sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright,"[2] a true story, a real statement of the case. "And by these, my son, be admonished." 'Do you, my son, accept this father's legacy; and do you, my people, receive at your monarch's hand this "Basilicon Doron," this autobiography of your penitent prince. These chapters are "words of truth:" revivals of my former self—reproductions of my reasonings and regrets—my fantastic hopes and blank failures, during that sad voyage round the coasts of vanity. "By these be admonished." Without repeating the guilty experiment, learn the painful result—listen to the moans of a melancholy worldling; for I shall sing again some of those doleful ditties for which I exchanged the songs of Zion. Look at these portraits—they are not fancy sketches—they are my former self, or, rather, my former selves: that lay figure in the royal robes, surmounted first by the lantern-jaws of the book-worm, now exchanged for the jolly visage of the gay

[1] Chap. xii. 12 [2] Chap. i. 12; xii. 9, 10.

gourmand, and presently refining into the glossy locks and languid smile of the Hebrew exquisite: now chuckling with the merriment of the laughing philosopher, curling anon into the bitter sneer of the cynic, and each in succession exploding in smoke; not a masque, not a mummery, not a series of make-believes, but each a genuine evolution of the various Solomon—look at these pictures, ye worldlings, and as in water face answers to face, so in one or other of these recognise your present likeness and foresee your destiny.'

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and it is not the less "profitable" because some of it is the inspired record of human infirmity. The seventy-third Psalm is a lesser Ecclesiastes. There Asaph tells us the workings of his mind when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." And he was so full of resentment and envy that his "feet were almost gone." He had "well nigh slipped" into utter apostasy: when a timely visit to the sanctuary intercepted his fall. There two forgotten verities flashed upon his mind:—the coming retribution, and the all-sufficiency of the believer's portion. "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a-whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works." And just as Asaph's heart for a time was "grieved,"—"So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee,"—so Solomon's feet actually slipped, and in this book he gives us his various reasonings whilst still a backslider. And just as Asaph's "conclusion of the whole matter" was the blessedness of piety and the certainty of righteous retribution,—"It is good for me to draw near to God: they that are far from thee shall perish,"—so Solomon's conclusion is identical: "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." It need, therefore, in no wise surprise us if we find in these chapters many strange questionings and startling opinions, before we arrive at the final conclusion. Intermingled with much that is noble and holy, these "doubtful disputations" are not the dialogue of a believer and an infidel, but the soliloquy of a "divided heart"—the debate of a truant will with an upbraiding conscience. As we listen to the inward colloquy we could sometimes fancy that we hear a worldling and a sceptic contending with an Abdiel. But, after all, it is only the fitful meditation of one who once knew better, and who, by bitter discipline, is learning anew the lesson of his youth. We know not to what better to compare it than a labyrinthine journey underground. Impatient of the daylight—

quitting those pastures green and paths of righteousness in which he had walked with his saintly sire—tired of religion and its simple pleasures, he dives into a subterranean avenue which is to end in a Goshen of central light—a poet's paradise with emerald turf and flaming flowers. And the first portion of his fantastic path is lighted by radiance from the entrance—the recollected knowledge of his wiser days. But that dim twilight fades, and the explorer quickly finds that even Solomon is not phosphorescent, and, stumbling on, he souses into a fetid quag. Struggling through the slough of sensuality, he reaches a brilliant cave, where pendant crystals glorify the beams transmitted through the fissured roof, and where the very stones are musical; and, for a season, the royal pilgrim expatiates in a temple sacred to architecture and each fine art. But, wearied with its splendour, shivering at its frosty elegance, he presses on again; and, except when now and then a shaft overhead lets down some light into the dreary tunnel, all benighted, —as on the rugged roof he strikes his brow, or on the flinty splinters wounds his feet,—we can overhear the muffled voice which execrates the vexation and vanity. And when, at last, with sullied robes and grisled locks he emerges to the spot from which he started, he grudges so long a journey, and a route so painful, back to his better self; and resuming his old position, though scarcely regaining his original cheerfulness, he advises us to be content with his experiment and to begin with his "conclusion." If, therefore, we remember the real structure of the book, and as a lamp to its dim passages take the

light from its final landing-place, much of its obscurity will flee away ; and we may listen without disquiet to the darkest queries and most desperate declarations of Solomon benighted, when in Solomon recovered we expect the answer and the antidote.

There is little difference in men's bodily stature. A fathom, or thereabouts—a little more or a little less—is the ordinary elevation of the human family. Should a man add a cubit to this stature, he is followed along the streets as a prodigy ; should he fall very far short of it, people pay money for a sight of him, as a great curiosity. But were there any exact measurement of mental statures, we should be struck by an amazing diversity. We should find pigmy intellects too frequent to be curiosities. We should find fragile understandings to which the grasshopper is a burden, and dwarfish capacities unable to grapple with the easiest problems : whilst, on the other hand, we should encounter a few colossal minds, of which the altitude must be taken, not in feet, but in furlongs—tall, culminating minds, which command the entire tract of existing knowledge—minds whose horizon is their coeval hemisphere ; or, loftier still, prophetic minds, on which is already shining the unrisen sun of some future century.

Such a mind was Solomon's. His information was vast. He was the encyclopædia of that early age. He was an adept in the natural sciences :—"He spake of trees, from the cedar to the hyssop ; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes," as the sacred historian

simply words it; or, in modern terminology, he was a botanist, and acquainted with all departments of zoology, from the annelida up to the higher vertebrata. His wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East country, and all the children of Egypt. And then his originality was equal to his information. He was a poet: his "Songs" were upwards of a thousand. And a moralist: his proverbs were three thousand. He was a sagacious politician; and as the chief magistrate of his own empire, he was famous for the equity and acuteness of his decisions. He had a splendid taste in architecture and landscape-gardening; and his enormous wealth enabled him to conjure into palpable realities the visions of his gorgeous imagination; whilst, to crown the whole —unlike Moses and many others, men of stately intellect, but stammering speech—the wisdom of Solomon found utterance in language like itself; and whilst the eloquence still lived of which the Bible has preserved some examples, crowned students and royal disciples came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

Now, this man, so mightily endowed—if you add to his intellectual elevation the pedestal of his rare good fortune, mounting the genius of the sage on the throne of the sovereign—this peerless man, this prime specimen of humanity—it would appear that Providence raised up, or this, among other purposes. From the day when Adam fell it had been the great inquiry among men, Where and how to find the true felicity? And though the most High assured them that they could only find it where they had formerly enjoyed it—in unison with

Himself, and in His conscious friendship—of this they were quite incredulous. It was still the problem, Apart from Infinite Excellence, how shall we be happy? Though blessedness was not far from any one of them, in delirious search of it, men burrowed in gold mines, and turned over every mound of rubbish, drilled deep into the rock, and dived deep into the sea. And though none succeeded, few despaired. There was always an apology for failure. They had sought in the right direction, but with inadequate appliances. They were not rich enough; they were not strong enough; they were not clever enough. Had they been only a little wealthier; had they been better educated; had they possessed more leisure, talent, power—they were just about to touch the talisman: they would have brought to light the philosopher's stone. And as it is part of man's ungodliness to believe his fellow-sinner more than his Creator, the Most High provided an unimpeachable testimony. He raised up Solomon. He made him healthy and handsome—wise and brilliant. He poured wealth into his lap, till it ran over: He made him absolute monarch of the finest kingdom which the world at that time offered; and, instead of savages and Pagans, gave him for his subjects a civilized and a religious people. And that he might not be distracted by wars and rumours of wars, He put into his hand a peaceful sceptre, and saved him from the hardships of the field and the perils of the fight. Thus endowed and thus favoured, Solomon commenced the search after happiness. Everything except godly, he devoted himself to the art of enjoyment. And in carry-

ing on his own experiment he unwittingly, but effectually, became God's demonstration. Into the crucible he cast rank and beauty, wealth and learning; and, as a flux, he added youth and genius; and then, with all the ardour of his vehement nature, he urged the furnace to its whitest glow. But when the grand projection took place, from all the costly ingredients the entire residuum was, Vanity of vanities! And ere he left the laboratory, he made ink of the ashes; and in the confessions of a converted worldling, he was constrained to write one of the saddest books in all the Bible.

His first recourse was knowledge. Communing with his own heart, he said, "Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know (more) wisdom, and to know madness and folly (that is, mirth and satire): I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." And, as he adds elsewhere, "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness to the flesh."

No, no. *Carpe horam.* Life is short, and learning slow. Quit that dingy study, and out into the laughing world. Make a bonfire of these books, and fill your reed-quiver with bird-bolts. Exchange the man of letters for the man of pleasure. And so he did. "I gave myself to wine, I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards." But here, too, he was destined to

disappointment. For the coarse pleasures of the carouse and the wine-cup his cultivated mind had little affinity; and when day-spring revealed the faded chaplets, the goblets capsized, and the red wine-pools on the floor of the banquet-hall; when the merry-making of yesternight only lived in the misery of the morning, he exclaimed, "Such laughter is mad; and such mirth, what doeth it?" Even so, of the more elegant pastimes—the palace, the fish-pond, the flower-garden, the menagerie—the enjoyment ended when the plan was executed; and as soon as the collection was completed, the pleasure of the collector ceased. "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

But there still remained one solace. There must be something very sweet in absolute power. Though the battle has been going on for six thousand years, and the odds are overwhelming—a million resisting one—yet still the love of power is so tremendous,—to say to one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Do this, and he doeth it—the right to say this is so delicious, that sooner or later, the million lose the battle, and find the one their master. Now, this ascendency over others Solomon possessed to a rare degree. "The Preacher was king in Jerusalem." He was absolute monarch there. And to flatter his instinct of government still more, surrounding states and sovereigns all did homage at Jerusalem. But no sooner did he find his power thus supreme and unchallenged,

than he began to be visited with misgivings as to his successor—misgivings for which the sequel showed that there was too good reason. "Yea, I hated all the labour which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity."

I need not say how the experience of most worldlings has been Solomon's sorrow repeated, with the variations incident to altered circumstances, and the diminished intensity to be expected in feebler men—vanity and vexation of spirit all over again. And as we are sometimes more impressed by modern instances than by Bible examples, we could call into court nearly as many witnesses as there have been hunters of happiness—mighty Nimrods in the chase of Pleasure, and Fame, and Power. We might ask the statesman, and, as we wished him a happy new year, Lord Dundas would answer, "It had need to be happier than the last, for I never knew one happy day in it." We might ask the successful lawyer, and the wariest, luckiest, most self-complacent of them all would answer, as Lord Eldon was privately recording when the whole Bar envied the Chancellor,—"A few weeks will send me to dear Encombe, as a short resting-place between vexation and the grave." We might ask the golden millionaire, "You must be a happy man, Mr. Rothschild?" "Happy!—me happy! What! happy, when just as you

are going to dine you have a letter placed in your hand, saying, 'If you do not send me £500, I will blow your brains out?' Happy! when you have to sleep with pistols at your pillow?" We might ask the clever artist, and our gifted countryman would answer, of whose latter days a brother writes, "In the studio, all the pictures seemed to stand up like enemies to receive me. This joy in labour, this desire for fame, what have they done for him? The walls of this gaunt sounding place, the frames, even some of the canvasses, are furred with damp. In the little library where he painted last, was the word 'Nepenthe?' written interrogatingly with white chalk on the wall."[1] We might ask the world-famed warrior, and get for answer the "Miserere" of the Emperor-monk,[2] or the sigh of a broken heart from St. Helena. We might ask the brilliant courtier, and Lord Chesterfield would tell us, "I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and I do not regret their loss. I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow-candles which illuminate the whole decorations, to the astonishment of an ignorant audience." We might ask the dazzling wit, and, faint with a glut of glory, yet disgusted with the creatures who adored him, Voltaire would condense the essence of his existence into one word, "*Ennui.*" And we might ask the world's poet, and we would be answered with an imprecation by that splendid genius,[3] who

[1] Memoir of David Scott, R.S.A. [2] Charles v. [3] Byron.

"Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump
Of fame; drank early, deeply drank; drank draughts
That common millions might have quenched—then died
Of thirst, because there was no more to drink."

But without going so far as these historic instances, I make my appeal to all the candour and self-knowledge here present, and I ask, Who is there that, apart from God's favour, has ever tasted solid joy and satisfaction of spirit? You have perhaps tried learning. You have wearied your flesh acquiring some branch of knowledge, or mastering the arcana of some science; and you promised yourself that, when once you were an adept, it would introduce you to a circle of transcendental friends, or would drown you in a flood of golden fame. You won the friends, and, apart from this special accomplishment, you found them so full of petty feuds and jealousies, so cold-hearted or so coarse-minded, that you inwardly abjured them, and vowed that you must follow learning for its own rewards; or you won the fame—you secured the prize—you caught the coveted distinction, and like the senior wrangler,[1] you found that you had "grasped a shadow." Or you tried some course of gaiety. You said, "Go to now—I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure." You dressed—you took pains with your appearance; you studied the art of pleasing. But even self-love could not disguise that some rival was more dazzling, more graceful and self-possessed, and had made a more brilliant impression: and you came home mortified at your own sheepishness and rustic blundering; or if content to mingle

[1] Henry Martyn.

passively in others' merriment, tattling with the talkers, and drifting along the tide of drollery, was there no pensive reflection as, late at night, you sought your dwelling? —did you not say of laughter, "It is mad? and of mirth, What doeth it?" Or, perhaps, at some pleasant time of year, you made up a famous ploy. And the excursion went off, but the promised enjoyment never came up. Mountain breezes did not blow away your vexing memories, nor did the soft sea-wind heal your wounded spirit. In the rapid train you darted swiftly, but at the journey's end you were mortified to find that your evil temper had travelled by the same conveyance. And though it was a classic or a sacred stream into which you looked, not even Arethusa nor Siloah could smooth from off your countenance the furrows of anxiety, or the frown of crossness which cast its shadow there. The truth is, all will be vanity to the heart which is vile, and all will be vexation to the spirit which the peace of God is not possessing. When you remember how vast is the soul of man, and also what a mighty virus of depravity pervades it, you might as well ask, How many showers will it need to make the salt ocean fresh? as ask, How many mercies will it need to make a murmuring spirit thankful and happy? You might as soon ask, How many buckets of water must you pour down the crater of Etna before you convert the volcano into a cool and crystal *jet d'eau?* as ask, How many bounties must Providence pour into a worldling's spirit before that spirit will cease to evaporate them into vanity, or send them fuming back in complaint and vexation?—

"Attempt how vain—
With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,
With aught but moral excellence, truth, and love—
To satisfy and fill the immortal soul!
To satisfy the ocean with a drop;
To marry immortality to death;
And with the unsubstantial shade of time
To fill the embrace of all eternity!" [1]

[1] Pollok's *Course of Time*, Book iv.

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III.

A GREATER THAN SOLOMON.

"The Queen of the South . . . . came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."—MATT. XII. 42.

IT was autumn with the Hebrew commonwealth. Like withered leaves from the sapless tree, the Jews easily parted from the parent Palestine, and were blown about, adventurers in every land; and like that fungous vegetation which rushes up when nobler plants have faded, formalism and infidelity were rankly springing everywhere; and it was only a berry on the topmost bough—some mellow Simeon or Zacharias—that reminded you of the rich old piety. The sceptre had not quite departed from Judah, but he who held it was a puppet in the Gentiles' hand; and with shipless harbours, and silent oracles, with Roman sentinels on every public building, and Roman tax-gatherers in every town, patriotism felt too surely, that from the land of Joshua and Samuel, of Elijah and Isaiah, of David and Solomon, the glory was at last departing. The sky was lead, the air a winding-sheet; and every token told that a long winter was setting

in. It was even then, amid the short days and sombre sunsets of the waning dynasty, that music filled the firmament, and in the city of David a mighty Prince was born. He grew in stature, and in due time was manifested to Israel. And what was the appearance of this "greater than Solomon"? What were His royal robes? The attire of a common Nazarene. What were His palaces? A carpenter's cottage, which He sometimes exchanged for a fisherman's hut. Who were His ministers and His court attendants? Twelve peasants. And what was His state chariot? None could He afford; but in one special procession He rode on a borrowed ass. Ah! said we so? His royal robe was the light inaccessible, whenever He chose to let it shine through; and Solomon, in all his glory, was never arrayed like Jesus on Tabor. His palace was the Heaven of Heavens; and when a voluntary exile from it, little did it matter whether his occasional lodging were a rustic hovel, or Herod's halls. If fishermen were His friends, angels were His servants; and if the borrowed colt was His triumphal charger, the sea was proud when, from crest to crest of its foaming billows, it felt His majestic footsteps moving; and when the time had arrived for returning to His Father and His God, the clouds lent the chariot, and obsequious airs upbore Him in their reverent hands. Solomon's pulpit was a throne, and he had an audience of kings and queens. The Saviour's synagogue was a mountain-side—His pulpit was a grassy knoll or a fishing-boat—His audience were the boors of Galilee; and yet, in point of intrinsic greatness, Solomon did not more excel the children playing in the

market-place, than He who preached the Sermon on the Mount excelled King Solomon.

Looking at Solomon as a Teacher, the first thing that strikes us is, that he was a great querist. Next to the man who can answer a question thoroughly, is the man who can ask it clearly. Our world is full of obscure misery—dark wants and dim desiderata: like a man in a low fever, its whole head is sick, and its whole heart faint; but it can neither fix exactly on the focus of disease, nor give an intelligent account of its sensations. But in this respect Solomon was the mouthpiece of humanity. Speaking for himself, he has so described the symptoms, that a whole ward—an entire world of fellow-sufferers—may take him for their spokesman. "These are exactly my feelings. I have experienced all that he describes. I am just such another fitful anomaly—just such a constant self-contradiction. One day I wish time to fly faster; another I am appalled to find that so little remains. One day I believe that I shall die like the brutes; and, frantic in thinking that a spirit so capacious is to perish so soon, I chafe around my cage, and beat those bars of flesh which enclose a captive so godlike; I try to burst that cell which is ere long to be a sepulchre: anon I am content, and I say, 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die:' and no sooner is the carnival over than I start up, conscious of my crime—descrying the forgotten judgment-seat, and aghast at my own impiety in embruting an heir of immortality. One day I deny myself, and save up a fortune for my son and successor; another, it strikes me he may prove a prodigal, and I fling the hoard away.

Now it seizes me that I must be famous; and then I grow disgusted with the praise of fools. What will cure a broken heart? What will fill an abysmal gulf? What will make a crooked nature upright? What will restore his Creator unto man, and man unto himself?"

And Jesus answers: "Believe in God and believe in me, and your heart will cease to be troubled. Hunger after righteousness, and your craving spirit will be filled. The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life: imbibe them, ponder them, delight in them, and they will satisfy the vastest desires of the most eager soul. What will make the crooked upright? Be born again. What will restore the Creator to revolted man? God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should have eternal life." And thus, one by one, the great Evangelist answers the queries of the great Ecclesiastes. And if the sage has done a service, who, in articulate words, describes the symptoms of the great disease, how incomparably greater is the service done by the Saviour, who prescribes the remedy! After all, Solomon is only an eloquent patient; Jesus is the Divine Physician.

Again: Solomon's teaching is mainly negative. Five centuries later, it was the business of the wisest Greek to teach his brethren knowledge of their ignorance. And so dexterously did he manage his oblique mirrors—so many of his countrymen did he surprise with side-views and back-views of themselves; so much fancied knowledge did he confute, and so many Athenians did he put out of conceit with themselves, that at last the Athenians lost

conceit of him, and killed the mortifying missionary. And, like Socrates, Solomon is an apostle of sincerity. His pen is the point of a diamond; and as it touches many of this world's boasted jewels, it shows that they are only coloured crystal. His sceptre is a rod of iron, and as it enabled him to command all pleasures, so it enables him to prove their nullity; and before his indignant stroke they crash like potsherds, and dissipate in dust. But more sincere than Socrates. His tests, his probes, his solar lamp, the Greek employed for his neighbour's benefit; such an awful earnestness had God's Spirit enkindled in the Hebrew sage, that his grand struggle was against self-deception: and the illusions on which he spends his hottest fury are the phantoms which have befooled himself. Socrates gossips; Solomon communes with his own heart. Socrates gets his comrade to confess; Solomon makes his own confession. And so terrible is his intensity, that if it be well for our modern idoloclasts and showers-up of shams that there is no Socrates now-a-days to show them to themselves, it will be well for us all if we take a pattern from Solomon's noble fidelity, and if we strive after his stern self-knowledge. And yet the result was mainly negative. He had dived deep enough into his nature to find that there was no genuine goodness there; and from the heights of his stately intellect he swept a wide horizon, and reported that within his field of view there was perceptible no genuine happiness. If he was taller than other men, he was sorry to announce that, far as he could see, no fountain of joy now sprang in this desert: no tree of life grew hereaway. If he was

stronger than other men, he had bad news for them: he had tried the gate of Eden, and shoved it and shaken it: but he feared no mortal shoulders could move it on its hinges, nor any human contrivance force it from its fastenings.

But if Solomon in his teaching was mainly negative, Jesus was as mainly positive. Solomon shook his head and told what happiness is not: Jesus opened his lips, and enunciated what it is. Solomon said, "Knowledge is vanity. Power is vanity. Mirth is vanity. Man and all man's pursuits are perfect vanity." Jesus said, "Humility is blessedness. Meekness is blessedness. Purity of heart is blessedness. God is blessed for evermore, and most blessed is the creature that is likest God. Holiness is happiness." "We labour and find no rest," said Solomon. Jesus answered, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest." "All is vanity," sighed the Preacher. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace," replied the Saviour. "What is truth?" asks Ecclesiastes. "I am the truth," returns the Divine Evangelist. Solomon was tall enough to scan half the globe and see an expanse of sorrow; the Son of Man knew all that is in heaven, and could tell of a Comforter who fills with peace unspeakable the soul immersed in outward misery. Solomon could tell that the gate of bliss is closed against human effort. Jesus has the key of David, and opens what Adam shut; and into the Father's propitious presence He undertakes to usher all who come through Him. Solomon composed Earth's epitaph, and on the tomb of the species wrote, All is Vanity. Look-

ing forward to eternity, Jesus was content to ask for His disciples no meaner destiny than a share in those pleasures which would make Himself most blessed for evermore.[1]

Nay, so positive was the Saviour's teaching, that, in order to understand Him rightly, we must remember that He was not only the Prophet, but the doctrine; not only the Oracle uttering God's truth, but his very self that Truth. Other prophets could tell what God's mind is: Jesus was that mind. "The law"—a portion of God's will—"was given by Moses; but grace and truth"—the gracious reality, the truthful plenitude of the Divine perfections, "came by Jesus Christ." He was the express image of the Father. He was the Word Incarnate. And to many a query of man's wistful spirit, He was the embodied answer. Is there any immortality to this soul? Is there any second life to this body? "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you to myself." "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me shall never die: I will raise him up at the last day." Is there any mediation betwixt man and his Maker?—is there any forgiveness of sin? "I am the way." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." "Go in peace: thy sins are forgiven thee." Is there any model of excellence exempt from all infirmity? any pattern in which the Most High has perfect complacency? "He was holy and harmless, separate from

[1] Matt. v. 3–12; xi. 28–30; John xvi. 33; xiv. 6, 16, 17; Rev. iii. 7; John x. 9; vi. 37; xiv. 2; xvii. 26.

sinners." "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." Solomon was wise; but Jesus was Wisdom. Solomon had more understanding than all the ancients; but Jesus was that eternal Wisdom of which Solomon's genius was a mere borrowed spark—of which the deep flood of Solomon's information was only an emitted rill.

To which we may add the contrast in their tone. Each had a certain grandeur. Solomon's speech was regal. It had both the imperial amplitude and the autocratic emphasis—stately, decisive, peremptory. But the Saviour's was Divine. There was no pomp of diction, but there was a God-like depth of meaning; and such was its spontaneous majesty, that the hearer felt, How easily he could speak a miracle! And miracles He often spake; but so naturally did they emerge from His discourse, and so noiselessly did they again subside into its current, that we as frequently read of men astonished at His doctrine, as of men amazed at His doings. But though both spake with authority—the one with authority as a king of men, the other with authority as the Son of God—there is a wonderful difference in point of the pervasive feeling. Like a Prometheus chained to the rock of his own remorse, the Preacher pours forth his mighty woes in solitude, and, truly human, is mainly piteous of himself. Consequently, his enthroned misery—his self-absorbed and stately sorrow, moves you to wonder, rather than to weep; and, as when you look at a gladiator dying in marble, in your compassion there is not much of tenderness. But though greater in His sorrows, the Saviour was

also greater in His sympathies; and though silent about His personal anguish, there is that in His mild aspect which tells each who meets it, If His grief be great, His love is greater. And whilst Solomon is so king-like that he does not ask you to be his friend, the Saviour is so God-like that He solicits your affection, and so brotherly that He wins it. Indeed, here is the mystery of godliness—God manifest in flesh, in order that flesh may see how God is love, and that through the loveliness of Jesus we may be attracted and entranced into the love of God. O melancholy monarch! how funereal is thy tread, as thou pacest up and down thy echoing galleries, and disappearest in the valley of Death-shadow, ever-sounding—Vanity of vanities! O Teacher blessed! how beautiful are Thy feet on the mountains, publishing peace! How benign Thy outstretched hand, which, to the sinner weeping over it, proves God's golden sceptre of forgiveness, and which then clasps that sinner's hand and guides him to glory! O Thou greater than Solomon, "let me see Thy countenance, let me hear Thy voice; for sweet is Thy voice, and Thy countenance is comely!"

A greater than Solomon. The cedar palace has long since yielded to the torch of the spoiler; but the home which Jesus has prepared for His disciples is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Thorns and thistles choke the garden of Engedi, and the moon is no longer mirrored in the fish-ponds of Heshbon; but no brier grows in the paradise above, and nothing will ever choke or narrow that fountain whence life leaps in fulness, or stagnate that still expanse where the Good Shepherd

leads His flock at glory's noon. And Solomon—the wonder of the world—his grave is with us at this day; his flesh has seen corruption; and he, too, must hear the voice of the Son of Man, and come forth to the great account: but Jesus saw no corruption. Him hath God raised up, and made a Prince and a Saviour; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. And, to notice only one other contrast: Solomon effloresced from his country's golden age; a greater than Solomon appeared when miry clay was mixing with its age of iron. Solomon was, so to speak, an effusion of his age, as well as its brightest ornament: the Son of Mary was an advent and an alien—a star come down to sojourn in a cavern—a root of Deity from our earth's dry ground. But though it was the Hebrew winter when He came, He did not fail nor was discouraged. He taught, He lived, He fulfilled all righteousness—He loved, He died. It was winter wheat; but the corn fell into the ground ungrudgingly; for as He sowed His seeds of truth, the Saviour knew that He was sowing the summer of our world. And as, one by one, these seeds spring up, they fetch with them a glow more genial; for every saved soul is not only a sheaf for God's garner, but a benefaction to mankind. Already of that handful of corn which this greater Solomon scattered on the mountain-tops of Galilee, the first-fruits are springing; and by and by the fruit shall shake like Lebanon, and the Church's citizens shall be abundant as grass of the earth. On the wings of prophecy it is hastening towards us; and every prayer and every mission speeds it on—our world's latter

summer-burst, our earth's perennial June—when the name of Jesus shall endure for ever, and be continued as long as the sun; when men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed.

So great is this Prince of prophets, that the least in His kingdom is greater than Solomon. The saint is greater than the sage, and discipleship to Jesus is the pinnacle of human dignity. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and all the germs of undeveloped goodness. He is the true theology, the perfect ethics, the supreme philosophy; and no words can limit the mental ascendency and moral beauty to which that young man may aspire, who, in all the susceptibility of an adoring affection, consecrates himself to the service and society of the Son of God. My brothers! is it a presumptuous hope that, even whilst I speak, some of you feel stirring within you the desire to join yourselves to blessedness by joining yourselves to Jesus? Is it too much to hope that some of you, who are Christian young men already, are wishing and praying that God would make your characters less commonplace, and render your influences in your day more abundant and benign? Is it too much to hope that, even from this rapid survey, some shall retire with a happy consciousness—Blessed be God! I belong to a kingdom which cannot be moved, and am embarked in a cause which cannot be defeated? Is it too much to hope that some one who has found, in regard to godless enjoyment, "All is vanity," may now be led to exclaim, "Lord, I have viewed this world over, in which Thou hast set me; I have tried how this and that thing will fit my spirit and

the design of my creation, and can find nothing on which to rest, for nothing here doth itself rest; but such things as please me for a while in some degree, vanish and flee as shadows from before me. Lo! I come to Thee —the Eternal Being—the Spring of Life—the Centre of Rest—the Stay of the Creation—the Fulness of all things. I join myself to Thee; with Thee I will lead my life and spend my days, with whom I aim to dwell for ever, expecting, when my little time is over, to be taken up into Thine own eternity." [1]

[1] Quoted, in a deeply interesting account of Arthur H. Hallam, in the *North British Review*, vol. xiv., from "The Vanity of Man as mortal," by John Howe.

July 7, 1850.

IV.

THE VESTIBULE OF VANITY.

READ ECCLES. I. 2, 13.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

ECCLESIASTES is Solomon the Prodigal, re-exhibited by Solomon the Preacher. The wisest of worldlings here opens a window in his bosom, and shows us all those fluctuating emotions and conflicting passions which whirl and eddy in every heart whose currents run opposite ways.

In this separate enclosure, so unlike the surrounding Scripture, such a contrast to the joyous parterre which blossoms beside it,[1] the traveller has planted the wormwood and the rue, all the bitter herbs and the lurid which he gathered in his grand tour of Vanity; and he has left them—at once a memorial and a medicine—a record of his own painful experience, and a corrective to curious speculation and sensual indulgence.

The right way to understand Ecclesiastes is to read it alongside of the other Scriptures. Obscure in itself, we must take the daylight at the end as a lamp, to guide us as we go; and, for its duskier recesses, we may borrow the

[1] The Song of Solomon.

bright lantern of prophets and evangelists. We shall thus not only find its perusal safe and profitable; but, as its dark sayings flash into significance, and its negations are filled up by counterpart verities, in its very sternness we shall recognise another feature of Revelation's symmetry. Solomon will tell us the vanity of doubt; the rest of the Bible will tell us the blessedness of a firm belief. Solomon will tell us the misery of the selfist, who seeks to be his own all in all; the evangelists will tell us the blessedness of a true benevolence. Solomon will tell us the vanity of the creature; the rest of the Bible reveals the sufficiency of the great Creator. Solomon will tell us how he amassed unprecedented riches, but found no comfort in them: his shepherd sire will answer by anticipation, "My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Solomon will tell us how, in a palace and a crown, and in imperial fame, he found nothing but chagrin: Jesus will answer, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace." Solomon the sage will tell us, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Solomon the saint will answer, "O Saviour, Thy love is better than wine. Draw me, and I will run after Thee. Tarry with me until the day break and the shadows flee away."

This passage is the preamble to the book. And it is an appropriate preface. Like sentinels of cypress, cold and glaucous, at a winter-garden's gate; like sphinxes of solemn stone flanking the entrance of the Silent Land, this prologue is a fit introduction to the mournful story we

are about to read, and ushers us at once into its realms of dreariness.

As much as if he said, "It is all a weary go-round. This system of things is a perpetual self-repetition—quite sickening. One generation goes, another comes. The sun rises, and the sun goes down. That was what the sun did yesterday, and what I expect it will do to-morrow. The wind blows north, and the wind blows south; and this is all it has been doing for these thousand years. The rivers run into the sea, and it would be some relief to find that sea growing fuller; to perceive the clear waters wetting the dry shingle, and brimming up to the green fields, and floating the boats and fishes up into the forest: but even that inconvenient novelty is denied us; for though the Nile and many a river have been tumbling a world of water into it, this tide will not overstep its margin; the flood still bulges, but still refuses to cross its bounds. Words[1] themselves are weariness, and it would tire you to enumerate those everlasting mutations and busy uniformities which make up this endless screw of existence. There are no novelties, no wonders, no discoveries. This universe does not yield an eye-full, an arm-full, to its occupant. The present only repeats the past, the future will repeat them both. The inventions of to-day are the forgotten arts of yesterday, and our children will forget our wisdom, only to have the pleasure of fishing up, as new prodigies, our obsolete truisms. There is no new thing under the sun, yet no repose. Perpetual functions and transient objects—permanent combinations, yet shift-

[1] דברים so rendered by Knobel and others.

ing atoms—sameness, yet incessant change, make up the monotonous medley. Woe's me for this weary world!"

In such feelings I think it possible that a few of my hearers may sympathize. To you it is very painful this fugacity of time—this flight of years and ages—this coming and going of the generations. And to you it is very oppressive—this monotony of life—this constant recurrence of the same small pleasures—and this total absence of any magnificent enjoyment. You want something of which you may say, "See, this is new," and withal something of which you may feel, "Now this is good—this is noble: here is something which will never pass away: a joy that will be my comrade through eternity—for neither it nor I shall ever die." From such vexing thoughts might you not escape by taking refuge in one permanence and one variety to which the royal Preacher does not here advert? I mean the soul's immortality, and the renewed soul's perpetual juvenescence; that attribute of mind which makes it the survivor of all changes, and that faculty of regenerate humanity which renders all things new, and suffuses with perpetual freshness things the most familiar.

It is true that, compared with many visible objects, man is ephemeral. Compared with the sun that shines over him—the air which fans him—the ocean on which he floats, his "duration is a swift decay." And there is much pensiveness in the thought of his own frailty. To look out, as we were last week looking, on the plenitude of summer,—to view the exuberance of verdure in the woods, and the soft warmth upon the waters—to inhale

the fragrance of roses, mingling with earth's ripeness, and think how soon our eyes must shut for ever on that landscape—how soon aromatic breezes and blushing flowers shall stir no animation in our tombs,—to think that there will be as much of ecstasy in the season, but in that ecstasy we shall be no sharers; or, as the poet has expressed it in his "Farewell to the Brook,"—

"Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
Thy tribute wave deliver;
No more by thee my steps shall be,
For ever, and for ever.

But here will sigh thine alder tree,
And here thine aspen shiver;
And here by thee will hum the bee,
For ever, and for ever.

A thousand suns will stream on thee,
A thousand moons will quiver;
But not by thee my steps shall be,
For ever, and for ever."[1]

In such contemplations there is a deep pathos, and to surrender the spirit to their habitual mastery would be to live a life of constant melancholy.

But, whatever may be the sensations of worldlings, these ought not to be the feelings of Christians. Jesus Christ hath brought immortality to light through the Gospel. He has taught us that amidst all sublunary mutations, there is perpetuity in the soul of man. He has assured us that the man who believes in Himself shall never die, and that of all things which ever tenanted this planet, the most enduring are Himself and those whom faith and affection make one with Himself; the great

[1] Tennyson.

Alpha and Omega, and all the redeemed existence included in His own.

But more than that, have you thought, my friends, on the immortalizing faculty of your own immortal minds? The soul of man is not only earth's true amaranth, but earth's only antiseptic. It is only in that soul that this visible creation will by and by exist at all. It is only in your deathless memory that its fair scenes and curious objects will, ere long, survive; but there they can never die. Already the face of things has entirely changed since the days of Solomon. No limner has preserved the aspect of Palestine as his poetic father viewed it. But there are memories in which it lives. The well of Bethlehem—its streets, its houses, and its stables, as they stood a thousand years before the Saviour of the world was born in one of them; the copse where the young shepherd cut his crook, and the bazaar where he bought his harp; the slopes tufted with hyssop and elastic with thyme, where his broad-tailed flocks cropped the herbage, and the trees where they rested at noon; the muster of the Philistines on one side of the torrent, and Israel's tents on the other—all these have vanished from under the sun, but all these are still vivid in the spectator's strengthened memory. And there, too, are still depicted portraits which the artists of earth can only imagine;—Jesse's manly port as, with yeoman pride, he stalked out and in among his thriving herds and soldier sons,—Samuel's reverend visage as he poured the anointing oil,—Goliath's mighty bulk as he fell over on the quaking turf,—Jonathan's tearful smile as he bade farewell when

setting out for that fatal Gilboa. And even so, if you be the children of God, this earth is your unfading heritage. Its best things will subsist as long as you care to preserve them. And, even after that earth and all its works, all its present features and all its present productions, have disappeared, there will be as many records of creation as there are holy recollections in heaven. When the aspen and the alder, when the bee in the fox-glove, and the roses round the bower, are extinct species, or are only enshrined in the amber of celestial reminiscence, you will still remember how earth's sanctuaries looked, and how its summers shone. Or should even sun and moon grow pale, their image will endure so long as you remember the happy hour when you gave yourself to God: so long as you remember the mossy bank where first, in the Saviour's invitations, you read your title to a mansion in the skies: so long as you remember the bright winter-night returning from the country communion, when the peace of God was a full tide in your bosom, and in the melting admiration of redeeming love, you looked up into the heavens and said, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" Ah! yes; the immortality of material forms is the immortality of the soul of man.

And of these material forms it is the highest function,—so to speak, it is their greatest privilege, to tell on man's immortality; to get so blended with man's being as to survive the wreck of matter, and share that existence which alone is undissolving. And though this suggests some painful thoughts; though it is sad to think how objects of cupidity and avarice, and how the incentives

to unholy passion may survive only in that self-accusing conscience which they helped to make a child of hell, boasting no monument beyond such miscreant memory: still there is a fitness, and one feels happy in the thought that God's good works shall be eternally embalmed in those immortal natures which they have helped to make good and beautiful, and shall never die so long as those spirits live to whose growth in grace they once gave aliment. Generations shall cease to come and go. The earth in its present arrangements, shall not "abide for ever." It shall soon be burned up, along with all its works. Its present races shall be annihilated, or only recognised as dim fossils in the calcined strata; and the very books which have been engraven and painted to represent their forms, shall perish in the mighty conflagration. But even then there will be tablets of Nature numerous as the spirits of the just made perfect; and what museums have failed to keep shall be still secure in the fire-proof cabinets of saintly recollection. No eagle shall then poise in the vacant firmament, but its restful gyrations, its sunward aspiring, will still be present to that mind which used to associate with it the self-renovating efforts of prayer: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up on wings as eagles." And from another planet the pilgrim coming would vainly search for Syria's far-famed lily; but its image still shall linger both in the memory and the character of that modest disciple to whom Jesus said not in vain, "Consider the lilies, and be clothed like them." There shall then be no Jacob's well; but its deep

shaft and shady canopy will still be pictured in her memory, who, one summer afternoon, found resting there a stranger, and obtained from Him water of everlasting life. And there shall be no Patmos then, but its creeks and caverns will all be mapped in his affectionate fancy, who found it the open gate of the New Jerusalem; and who will recall the lizards on its cliffs and the little fishes in its pools, with Apocalyptic light and Sabbath joy around them.

There is another sense in which these material agencies are working a moral progress, and so promoting the scheme of God. Looking up at the weather-cock, says the sage of vanity, "Woe's me for this weary wind! There, it was south this morning, and now it is north! How many ways it blows, and never long the same! What's the use of all this whirling?" And if it were only to make the vane spin round, the air might as well stagnate: there were no need of such wasted power. But whilst the valetudinarian is looking at the vane, the wind is careering over a continent, and doing the Creator's work in a hundred lands. It has called at yonder city, fetid with miasma and groaning with pestilence; and, with its besom of brisk pinions, it has swept the plague away. It has looked into yonder haven, and found a forest of laden ships sleeping over their freights, and it has chased them all to sea. And finding the harvest arrested in a broad and fertile realm—the earth chapped, and the crops withering—it is now hurrying with that black armament of clouds to drench it in lifesome irrigation. To narrow observation or to selfishness that wind

is an annoyance: to faith it is God's angel,[1] forwarding the mighty plan. 'Tis a boisterous night, and Pictish savages curse the noisy blast which shakes their peat-hovels round their ears; but that noisy blast has landed the Gospel on St. Andrews' shore. It blows a fearful tempest, and it sets some rheumatic joints an-aching; but the morrow shows dashed in pieces the awful Armada which was fetching the Spanish Inquisition to our British Isle. The wind blows east, and detains James's ships at Harwich: but it guides King William to Torbay. Yes, "the wind blows south and the wind blows north; it whirleth about continually, and returneth again according to its circuits." But in the course of these circuits the wind has blown to our little speck of sea-girt Happiness, the Gospel, and Protestantism, and civil and religious Liberty. And so, not of our islet only, but of our globe entire, and its continuous population. So far as the individual is concerned, so far as it affects the weather-index in the wind, there may be little seeming progress; nay, so far as concerns any plan which society proposes to itself, the favouring gale may shift and shift again, and the story of a nation be little better than the register of a stationary vane pirouetting on its windy pivot; but so far as affects the scheme of God, there is an *aura* in the universe which always drives one way. Predestination is a vane which never vibrates, and Providence a wind which never whirls about. The breath of God's Spirit and the strength of God's purpose are steadily wafting our world and all the worlds in one mighty

[1] Psalm civ. 3, 4.

convoy towards God's appointed haven in the distant future. So cheer up, Solomon, and all ye sighing sages; cheer up, you that complain of the sameness and insipidity of mundane affairs. Cheer up, you that pine for some grand disclosure, and long for something that shall fill your eye and satisfy your ear. When in the harbour of God's finished mystery, the sails of history lie furled, and the eternal anchor is dropped—when the last generation falls in and the last holy intelligence comes home, you who have so often asked, Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? you will see "all things made new;" you, whose eye has never been satisfied with seeing, will be satisfied when you see Him as He is; and you, whose ear was never satisfied with hearing, will long for nothing fuller when responsive to the overture which morning-stars sang so long ago, the grand *finale* shall burst from Immensity exclaiming, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever."

If, as we have said, the immortality of material forms is only that which they achieve through the immortality of the human soul; and if the true glorification of matter is its sanctifying influence on regenerate mind, we may learn two lessons from our argument:

First, that there is no harm in a vivid susceptibility of those material appearances and influences with which God has replenished the universe. Some religionists would make contempt of the creation a test of piety; but they greatly err. It was of the material universe that six

times over God said that it was "good." And it was in that material universe that the Son of God Incarnate evidently sought refreshment for His eyes, when weary with viewing vanity. Yes, Jesus Himself has taken to heaven some of its relics of Eden:

> "Oh, Saviour, gone to God's right hand,
> Yet the same Saviour still;
> Graved on Thy heart is this lovely strand
> And every fragrant hill."[1]

But, secondly, that susceptibility is good for nothing if it be not sanctifying. There is an idolatry of nature. There are some whose God is the visible creation, and not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is a voluptuousness in the enjoyment of nature. There are some to whom the landscape and its ingredients are neither the recreation fitting them for more active duties, nor the ladder of easy steps leading them up to adoring and loving thoughts of God; but, like the epicure over his viands, they sit down to the banquet as if they cared for no higher paradise. At this moment, when so many are panting for a purer air, and preparing to migrate to other scenes in search of it, it may be a word in season. Go, you that have worked hard for it—go and enjoy your holiday. But whithersoever you go, let all your religion go with you. If you go among foreigners, instead of gruffness and *hauteur*, take with you Christian complaisance, and do justice at once to the good feeling of England and the courtesy of real religion. And whether among compatriots or foreigners, take with you the Sab-

[1] M'Cheyne's "Sea of Galilee."

bath-day. Keep its hours as sacred in the hired lodging or the inn, as you keep them in your own well-ordered home. Pray for the places where you sojourn, and as seeds for the eternal harvest, it were well if you could drop some good words or arresting tracts as you pass along. And then, when bursts of beauty or surprises of grandeur come in upon your soul, let the thought also come in of your "Father," who "made them all." And thus associated with the profitable books you read, or the Christian intercourse you enjoyed, or the efforts at usefulness you there put forth,—places which to the vacant mind recall no memories, and to the profligate are only identified with dissipation and riot,—will to you be fraught with pleasant recollections; and, thus beautified and sanctified, the resorts and recreations of earth will be worthy of a mental pilgrimage even from the bowers of Paradise Restored.

July 14, 1850.

V.

THE MUSEUM.

READ ECCLESIASTES I. 12–18.

"In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

SOLOMON'S first recourse was philosophy. He was a king, and he could pursue his researches on a splendid scale. We know that he collected natural curiosities from distant countries, and it is likely that he attracted to his court the learned of many lands. Nor is it improbable that he attained an insight into natural phenomena, possessed by none of his contemporaries. To the present day Eastern magicians invoke his name as if he were a controller of the elements; a circumstance from which some have very gratuitously inferred that he must have been a magician himself. But the fact is interesting. It looks as if tradition still preserved a recollection of certain prodigies which science enabled him to perform, and it would suggest that he was an experimenter as well as an observer.

But it was not only apes and peacocks, cedars and hyssop, which he studied, and the elements on which he

experimented; he studied man. He looked at man's position in this world. He examined his story in time past. "He sought and searched out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven;" "he saw all the works that are done under the sun." And he did not confine himself to grave generalities; he did not read solely the stately history of kings. "He gave his heart to know madness and folly," as well as "wisdom;" nor was he so pedantic as not to gather instruction from the frivolous and fantastic as well as from the august in human nature. His appetite for knowledge was omnivorous, and whilst hungering for the harvest he was thankful for crumbs.

The result was, satiety without satisfaction; or rather, it was the sober certainty of "sorrow." "All the works done under the sun are vanity and vexation of spirit." Look at this Mesech of mortality! What a hot and noisy hive it is, and how each insect hums out and in on his consequential errands, till some night Death, the grim owner, comes and stifles all, and takes the honey. "I have seen all the works under the sun;" I know their object, I know their result. It is comfort, soul-content for which the millions moil and bustle. For this the clodpole delves in the stiff clay, and the pearl-fisher dives in the deep lagoon. From his fragrant woods the herbalist of Gilead would fain distil it, and from his royal dainties the Asherite strives to confect it. With its rich cargoes the ships of Tarshish and the dromedaries of Midian have many a time been laden; but when the time came to open the bales, nothing was found save ocean-brine or

desert sand. All was transmuted into vanity and vexation of spirit. "This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men." The very pursuit of knowledge is penal. The search after happiness is itself a sore punishment. Here, like a gin-horse, has the world been for ages tramping round and round, hoping to fetch up the golden bucket from the deep shaft of thought and effort; but alas! sin has cut the rope, and there is now no golden bucket at the end. Still, however, the blind gin-horse limps and wheezes on, and jades himself to death with this sore travail. I see the misery; I see not how to mend it. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." There is a twist in man's destiny, a bias in man's will, a crook in man's constitution which science cannot rectify. "And that which is wanting cannot be numbered." I have a list of those ingredients which constitute well-being, and which I am told that man once possessed, *e.g.*, peace of conscience, elasticity of temper, health, contentment, exemption from death, faith in the future; and I have made a survey of humanity and come back with an inventory of mere desiderata. These joys have vanished. The spoiler has been here. The regalia are rifled, and the onyx of Havilah has been torn from the crown which Adam wore in Paradise. And as the upshot of all I say, "Much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Happier that beggar child who can fancy his reed a sceptre, than that grey-haired monarch who knows that a sceptre is only gilded copper. Happier the fisher boy who, with his kettle, hopes to bail the sinking boat, than his wiser

father, who, through the widening leak, already sees their watery grave. Happier the peasant who fancies the magazine inexhaustible, than the governor who knows that it will be all consumed months before the harvest. In a world like this much science is much sorrow; for it is the knowledge of our penury—the statistics of starvation—the assurance that our case is desperate. Therefore, I break up my encyclopædic elysium, and on my temple of art inscribe, "Vanity and vexation of spirit:"—

> "Where ignorance is bliss,
> 'Tis folly to be wise."[1]

Unless it include the knowledge of the Living God, there is sorrow in much science; that is, the more a man knows, unless he also knows the Saviour, the sadder may we expect him to become. Of this we have an instance in a late philosopher, who, like Solomon, united to ardour of physical research a thoughtful and musing spirit, and who, in his *Last Days of a Philosopher*, has bequeathed to the world a manual of mournful "Consolations." It was not from any drawback in his outward lot, nor from any disappointment of his hopes, that Sir Humphry Davy took leave of life so gloomily. Of the sons of science few have been so favoured. In his grand discovery of the metallic bases, and in his more popular invention of the safety-lamp; in the command of a laboratory which

[1] As Lord Byron has expressed it, with his usual mixture of force and flippancy: "The lapse of ages changes all things: time, language, the earth, the bounds of the sea, the stars of the sky, and everything 'about, around, and underneath' man, *except man himself*, who has always been, and will always be, an unlucky rascal. The infinite variety of lives conduct but to death, and the infinity of wishes lead but to disappointment. All the discoveries which have yet been made have multiplied little but existence."

opened a royal road to chemistry, and in the splendid crowds who thronged to his lectures; from the moment that he found a generous patron till he became a Baronet of the United Kingdom, and President of the Royal Society, his whole career was a series of rare felicities. Nor was he the anchoret of science, a lonely and smoke-dried alchemist. He was a man of fashion, and, like Solomon, mingled "madness and folly" with graver pursuits. Yet with all his versatile powers—orator, philosopher, poet; and with all his distinctions glittering around him, his heart still felt hollow, and in his later journals the expressive entry was, "Very miserable." What was it that he wanted? He himself has told us: "I envy no quality of mind or intellect in others—not genius, power, wit, or fancy; but if I could choose what would be most delightful, and I believe most useful to me, I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing; for it makes life a discipline of goodness, creates new hopes when all earthly hopes vanish, and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights, calling up the most delightful visions, where the sensualist and sceptic view only gloom, decay, and annihilation."

Whilst the philosopher has here truly said that nothing can fill the central gulf in man's spirit, except a sound religious belief, he speaks of its attainment despondingly; and probably he felt, what many have expressed, that it is not easy for a man of science to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child." It is possible that some one now present may be in the same predicament. You wish to

believe, and are sorry to doubt : but you find that it is not easy to be at once the votary of science and the hearty disciple of Jesus Christ. When examining the evidence, or when reading the Bible itself, you are convinced that it is the Book of God. You recognise on its pages the same autograph with which you have long been familiar in the volume of creation, the same inimitable style of majesty, wisdom, goodness, and power ; and you own that to refuse its authenticating credentials would be to set at defiance all the laws of evidence. You believe the Bible as long as you are in its own society ; you love it as long as you commune with it. Looking into its face you perceive the halo, and tarrying in its precincts you are conscious of the Divinity indwelling. But passing away from it, and no longer warmed by its immediate inspiration ; mingling with the cold materialisms which it is your province to explore ; handling the dry preparations, or the gritty fossils, or the fuming retort—the joy and the fragrance and the vital influence of that Bible fade, and your devotion expires. Or when you bore into the strata, and find yourself descending through cycles of unimagined time ; or when you look up into the starry vault, and find yourself transported into a measureless abyss, and its unnumbered worlds—then all sorts of doubts and queries seem to rise like dragons from the deep, or they come trooping home like spectres from the dark immensity. You begin to feel yourself an atom in creation, and this world a mere mote in the universe, and you cannot help thinking revelation too great a boon for such an atom, and the Advent too great a wonder for such a world. You catch yourself saying, not in adora-

tion, but in doubt, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or what the son of man, that Thou shouldest visit him?"

Now, we shall not stop to suggest the cure for all these cavils. We might say that the best cure for nervous spectres or nightmare horrors, is to get a light, or look at something familiar and real; and the best cure for sceptic doubts is to look at the Bible itself. And we might further say, that the mind is soundest and best constructed which receives all truth on its own evidence, and which does not suffer every wandering chimera to disturb a truth thus ascertained. But as it is a difficulty embarrassing to some thoughtful minds, we may just glance a little at the religious doubts occasioned by the extent of the universe.

Twenty years ago some English voyagers were standing on a flat beach within the Arctic Seas. From the excitement of their looks, the avidity with which they gazed into the ground, and the enthusiasm with which they looked around them, it was evident that they deemed it a spot of signal interest. But anything outwardly less interesting you could hardly imagine. On the one side, the coast retreated in low and wintry ridges, and on the other a pale ocean bore its icy freight beneath a watery sky, whilst under the travellers' feet lay neither bars of gold nor a gravel of gems, but blocks of unsightly limestone. Yet it was the centre of one of nature's greatest mysteries. It was the reward of years of adventure and hardship; it was the answer to the long aspirations and efforts of science; it was the Magnetic Pole. The travellers grudged that a place so important should appear so

tame. They would have liked that it had been marked by some natural monument, a lofty peak or a singular rock. They were almost disappointed at not finding an iron needle as high as Cleopatra's own, or a loadstone as big as Mont Blanc.[1]

One day, a few summers since, sailing up the Rhine on a dull and windy afternoon, with little to look at but the sedgy banks and the storks exploring for reptiles among them—the vessel halted over against an old German town. We were looking languidly at its distant spires, and carelessly asked some one what town it was? "Worms." Worms! The battle-field of the Reformation; the little Armageddon where light and darkness, truth and error, liberty and despotism, the Son of God and the Prince of Darkness fought with one another not so long ago! Suddenly it seemed to swarm with Imperial troops and bluff old burghers; and had we been near enough we should have glanced up to the tiles on the house-tops, and in the streets looked out for Luther; but though it was the very spot where Protestantism gained its decisive victory, the spot where modern Europe threw off the cerements of the middle age and emerged to life, to enterprise, and freedom, there was no outward sign to tell it:—a dreary German town on a swampy plain—that was all.

Thus is it usually with memorable places. There is nothing external to arrest the eye: no gigantic landmark

[1] "We could have wished that a place so important had possessed more of mark or note. I could even have pardoned any one among us who had been so romantic or absurd as to expect that the magnetic pole was an object as conspicuous and mysterious as the fabled mountain of Sindbad," etc.—Ross's *Second Voyage.*

nor natural sign to serve for a *Siste, viator:* and the more refined and reflective do not grudge this. They feel that morally there is nothing so sublime as simplicity, and that it is God's way to work great wonders, not only by means of the things which are despised, but in despicable localities. Man is a materialist, and he tries to give a material magnitude to memorable places; but God chooses any common spot for the cradle of a mighty incident, or the home of a mighty spirit. Elbowing through Bread Street, amid trucks and drays and Cheapside tumult, who would fancy that here was the bower where the bard of Paradise was born? or looking up to that small window in the Canongate, who would guess that from these narrow precincts the spirit which new-created Scotland passed away? Or, sailing along the deep, what is there to tell you that this rock was the cage of the captured eagle, the basaltic prison where he chafed and pined and died; and yon, the willow-tree, under which he quietly slept, the Magor-Missabib of modern history? Or, floating on the soft Ægean, and looking up to the marble cliffs, where the aconite grows and the halcyon slumbers in the sun, what trace is there to tell that heaven's windows once opened here; that here the last thrill of inspiration was felt, and here the last glimpse of a glorified Redeemer vouchsafed? To the passing glance or the uninstructed eye, they are mean and inconspicuous places—so mean, that ascertaining the wonders connected with them, the vulgar world declares them unworthy of such distinction till otherwise distinguished, and exclaims, "Let us build a monument, a mausoleum, or a church." But to spirits truly great

every place is great which mind or moral glory has aggrandized. Patmos could not be improved though it were expanded into a continent: nor the house where a poet was born, or a reformer died, though it were enshrined beneath a national monument.

There is another remark which we may make regarding memorable places. They are usually more interesting to strangers than to the regular residents. Had the Esquimaux seen Captain Ross and his party, they would have marvelled what brought a band of Englishmen from their comfortable homes to that bleak and barren shore. And, far from sympathizing in their errand, they could hardly have been taught to understand it. Food, not information, being their chief motive to exertion, they would gladly have sold the magnetic pole for a few pounds of blubber or a few pints of oil. It was interesting enough to British science to bring many at the peril of their lives; but to the poor benighted natives it never had occurred that there was anything more important in that particular spot than in any other bend of their frozen beach. And so of historic scenes. You know more about Luther's bold appearance at the Imperial Diet than do most of the people who now reside at Worms. The spot where a great battle was fought, or where a hero breathed his last, is often interesting to its inhabitants only as a source of gain; and unless they be men of congenial taste and strong emotion, people will hurry daily past the places consecrated by departed greatness, without finding their step detained or their spirit stirred. It is reserved for the far-come traveller to stand still and wonder where the

incurious native trudges on, or only marvels what it is that the stranger is gazing at.

Our earth is a little world. In bulk it is little as compared with some of its neighbours. Even the same planetary system contains one world a hundred times, and another three hundred times as large; whilst, if suns be peopled worlds, there are suns hundreds of thousands of times as large. And there are races of intelligence and capacity far beyond our own—races both fallen and unfallen, to which our highest genius may seem a curious simplicity, and our vastest information an interesting ignorance, even as we may smile at the wit and knowledge of the Esquimaux. But this is the little world, and ours the lowly race, which God selected as the scene and the subject of the most amazing interposition. Like its own Bethlehem Ephratah, little among thousands of worlds; like its own Patmos, a point in the ocean of existence, our earth already stands alone in the universe, and will stand forth in the annals of eternity, illustrious for its fact without a parallel. It is the world on which the mystery of redemption was transacted: it is the world into which Christ came. And though lower than the angels, ours is the race which Jehovah has crowned with one peerless glory, one unequalled honour. It is the race which God has visited. Ours is the flesh which Incarnate Deity wore, and ours is the race for whose sinners the Son of God poured forth a ransom in His blood. This is the event which over our small planet sheds a solemn interest, and draws toward it the wondering gaze of other worlds. And just as in traversing the deep, when there rises on

the view some spot of awful interest or affecting memory, you slack the sail, and passengers strain the eye, and look on in silent reverence; so, in their journeys through immensity, the flight of highest intelligences falters into wonder and delay as they near this little globe. There is something in it which makes them feel like Moses at Horeb, "Let me draw near and see this great sight,"—a marvel and a mystery here which angels desire to look into. It is a little world, but it is the world where God was manifest in flesh. And though there may be spots round which the interest gathers in most touching intensity; though it may be possible to visit the very land whose acres were trod by "those blessed feet which our offences nailed to the accursed tree;" though you might like to look on David's town where the advent took place, and on the hills of Galilee where Christ's sermons were preached, and on the limpid Gennesareth which once kissed His buoyant sandals, and on that Jerusalem which He loved and pitied, and where He died, and that Olivet from whose gentle slope He ascended, I own that with me it is not so much Jerusalem or Palestine as Earth, Earth herself. Since it received the visit of the Son of God, in the eye of the universe the entire globe is a Holy Land; and such let it ever be to me. So wicked and sin-tainted that it must pass through the fire ere all be ended, it is withal so consecrated and so dear to heaven that it must not be destroyed; but a new earth with righteousness dwelling in it shall perpetuate to distant ages its own amazing story. And though an illustrious author wrote, "I have long lost all attachment to this world as a

locality,"[1] I do not wish to share the feeling. I like it for its very littleness. I like to stand on its lonely remoteness, and look aloft to vaster and brighter orbs; and when I consider the heavens, the moon and the stars, then say I, "What is man that thou shouldest visit him?" And, as in the voyage of the spheres, I sail away in this, the little bark of man, it comes over me with melting surprise and adoring astonishment that mine is the very world into which the Saviour came; and as I further recall who that Saviour was,—that for Him to become the highest seraph would have been an infinite descent, or to inhabit the hugest globe a strange captivity,—instead of seeking to inflate this tiny ball into the mightiest sphere, or stilt up this feeble race to angelic stature, I see many a reason why, if an Incarnation were at all to be, a little world should be the theatre and a little race the object.

It would indeed give melancholy force to the saying, "Much wisdom is much grief," if much wisdom were fatal to the Christian faith, and if he who increased his general knowledge must forfeit his religious hopes. But whilst science is fatal to superstition—whilst fatal to lying wonders and monkish legends, it is fortification to a scriptural faith. The Bible is the bravest of books. Coming from God, and conscious of nothing but God's truth, it awaits the progress of knowledge with calm security. It watches the antiquary ransacking among classic ruins, and rejoices in every medal he discovers, and every inscription he deciphers; for from that rusty

[1] John Foster.

coin or corroded marble it expects nothing but confirmations of its own veracity. In the unlocking of an Egyptian hieroglyphic, or the unearthing of some ancient implement, it hails the resurrection of so many witnesses; and with sparkling elation it follows the botanist as he scales Mount Lebanon, or the zoologist as he makes acquaintance with the beasts of the Syrian desert, or the traveller as he stumbles on a long-lost Petra, or Nineveh, or Babylon; for in regions like these every stroke of the hammer and every crack of the rifle awakens friendly echoes, and every production and every relic brings home a friendly evidence. And from the march of time it fears no evil, but calmly abides the fulfilment of those prophecies and the forthcoming of those events with whose predicted story Inspiration has already inscribed its page. It is not light but darkness which the Bible deprecates; and if men of piety were also men of science, and if men of science would "search the Scriptures," there would be more faith in the earth, and also more philosophy.

Few minds are sufficiently catholic. The psychologist is apt to despise the material sciences, and few mathematicians are good historians. But although there may be mutual indifference or rivalry amongst their votaries, there is no antagonism between the truths themselves. There exists a mind as well as a material universe, and there are laws of thought as well as laws of motion; and although it cannot be proved by algebra, yet it is pretty certain that Julius Cæsar invaded Britain, and that George Washington achieved the independence of America. All truths are friendly and mutually consistent, and he is the

wisest man who, if he cannot be an adept in all knowledge, dreads none and despises none; the Baconian intelligence to which the Word and the works of the Most High are alike a revelation, and to which both alike are faithful witnesses, though both are not alike articulate.

Be sages then, not sciolists. In the world of knowledge be cosmopolite, and be not the pedants of one department. Be historians as well as mathematicians. Receive every truth on its appropriate evidence, and there is nothing to prevent your faith in the Gospel from being equally strong with your faith in the course of nature. And although the Cyclops of science may have an eye for only one half of truth's horizon; although the bigot of demonstration may jeer at testimony; although the sectary of physics may repudiate history; if your knowledge be really "general:" if it be sufficiently comprehensive and catholic, and correct withal—the more you grow in knowledge the more will you be confirmed in that most excellent of all knowledge—a positive and historical Christianity.[1]

But you say, the natural sciences are all certain; theology is all conflict and confusion. Let us understand one another. If you say that the phenomena of nature are

[1] Of how much scepticism has Bacon given the rationale in his noted sentence, "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to Atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion."—*Essays*, 16. And of how many freethinkers might the foolish boasting be silenced in the words which Newton retorted on the infidel Halley, "I have studied these things, and you have not." There are various sources of unbelief: but next to the "evil heart," the most fruitful is ignorance. It is easy for a sciolist to be a sceptic; but it is not easy for a well-informed historian to reject the records of the faith.

all patent and explicit, we reply, And so are the sayings of Scripture. If candour and ingenuousness can interpret the one, they may equally expound the other. But if you say that, unlike the Word of God, His works have never been misunderstood, you surely forget that the "History of the Inductive Sciences" is just a history of erroneous interpretations replaced by interpretations less erroneous, and destined to be succeeded by interpretations still more exhaustive and true. If you smile at the Hutchisonian or Cocceian systems of exegesis; if you quote the hostile theories which still linger in the field of polemics, we ask, Is this peculiar to theology? Have you forgotten how the abhorrers of a vacuum abhorred Torricelli and Pascal? Have you forgotten how the old physiologists were vexed at Harvey for discovering the circulation of the blood? Do you not remember how the Stahlian chemists, like a burnt-out family, long lingered round the ashes of phlogiston, and denounced the wilful fire-raising of Lavoisier and oxygen? In early youth have you never seen a disciple of Werner, and pitied the affectionate tenacity with which he clung to the last plank of the fair Neptunian theory? Or would every world-maker forgive Lord Rosse's telescope if it swept from the firmament all trace of the nebular hypothesis? Or, because there is still an emissionary as well as an undulatory theory of light, must we deny that optics is a science, and must we hold that the laws of refraction and reflexion are mere matters of opinion? Nature is no liar, although her "minister and interpreter" has often mistaken her meaning; and, notwithstanding the errors which have received a temporary

sanction from the learned, there is, after all, nothing but truth in the material universe; and, so far as man has sagacity or sincerity to collect that truth, he has got a true science, a true astronomy, a true chemistry, a true physiology, as the case may be. And even so, whatsoever vagaries particular persons may indulge, or whatsoever false systems may receive a transient support, there is, after all, nothing but truth in the Bible, and so far as we have sincerity or sagacity to collect that Bible-truth, we have got a true religion. Nay, the most important facts and statements in that Word speak for themselves, and require no theory. And just as the mariner might safely avail himself of Jupiter's satellites, though Copernicus had never existed; just as the gunner must allow for the earth's attraction, whatever becomes of the Newtonian philosophy; just as the apothecary would continue to mix his salts and acids in definite proportions, even although some mishap befell the atomic theory; just as we ourselves do not close our eyes and dispense with light, until the partisans of rays shall have made it up with the advocates of ether—so the Scriptures abound in statements and facts on which we may safely proceed, whatever becomes of human theories. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature:" so far as it is founded on such sayings as these, religion is

not only the simplest, but, being immediately from God, it is the most secure of all the sciences.

However, we must add one remark. In the region of revealed truth, increasing knowledge will not always be increasing conviction, unless that knowledge be progressively reduced to practice. If knowledge be merely speculative, in extending it a man may only "increase sorrow;" for it is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness," and it is to the "doers" of His Father's will that the Saviour promises an assuring knowledge of His own "doctrine."[1] The mind needs tonics. For the body, next to wholesome food, the best toning is vigorous exercise; and if long cradled in a luxurious repose, the penalty is paid at last in so many imaginary ills as constitute a real one. And just as the child of sloth is haunted by visionary fears; as he dreads that his pulse will stop or the firmament fall in: so the man who arrests his moral activities and lets his fancy wander at its will; the man who is doing no service to God and no good in the world will soon become an intellectual hypochondriac. Musing, day-dreaming, marvelling, he will soon believe the phantoms of his own creating, and will not be able to believe the fact of God's revealing. And as the meet recompense of his indolence and uselessness, if he be not given up to believe a lie, his relaxed and pithless grasp will not be able to hold fast a single truth: like an interesting scholar, whose life we lately read, and who during years of speculative inactivity dwindled down from a devout and laborious clergyman to a languid and etiolated free-

[1] Rom. x. 10; John vii. 17.

thinker,[1] and like those voluptuous theologians of Germany who mope away their lives in selfish meditation, and who, never letting their brethren taste the fruits of their practical beneficence, are never themselves permitted to taste the blessing of a sure belief. The true remedy for this spiritual moodiness is a holy and abundant activity. So deemed the apostle Paul. In the midst of a glowing argument, and when refuting certain cavils against the Resurrection which had arisen in the Church of Corinth, he ejaculates all at once, "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God."[2] Like a sagacious physician who finds his patient haunted by fantastic fears, and who orders him out into the open air, and compels him to dig, or row, or wrestle; and after a few days of this rough regimen the crystal arm grows flesh and blood; and he who was afraid that the sky might fall and smother him, begins to have faith in the firmament—so the apostle sounds a *reveillez* in the ear of these drowsy reasoners. "Awake to righteousness! These doubts and difficulties are the fruits of sloth. They are the hypochondriac fancies which lazy loungers nurse in one another. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Rouse you!—Awake to righteousness! Bestir you in the business of practical Christianity, and these shadows will flee away!" And so to any haunted or unhappy mind here present, we give the same advice. Do you admit the Bible to be the

[1] See the remarks at the close of Archdeacon Hare's *Life of Sterling*.
[2] 1 Cor. xv. 33-35.

Word of God, and yet are you haunted with speculative doubts and evil surmisings as to any of its particular doctrines? Then, awake to righteousness! Your doubts are ridiculous, your fears are unfounded, and each idle hypothesis might be easily refuted. But the real remedy is, not reasoning, but righteousness; not the arguments of others, but your own practical piety. Awake, then, to righteousness. Embody in your conduct your present limited stock of conviction. Try to pray more, or praise more; try to cure the bad temper or the unholy passion; try to do some good to your neighbours: and that very effort will be the cure of some cavils. It will teach you, for one thing, that the heart is desperately wicked, and that if God do not change it, nothing else can. And that discovery will force you to prayer, and that prayer will procure an answer, and that answer will deepen your trust in God; and thus item by item your faith will grow exceedingly. Thus, by the corrective of wholesome discipline, and by being confronted with realities, your foolish doubts will dissipate; and the doctrine which was incredible to a lazy and dyspeptic intellect, will soon be absorbed and assimilated by a sound understanding, and become the joy and rejoicing of a sanctified soul.

Alas! for the knowledge which knows no Saviour. Alas! for the science which includes no Gospel. The most erudite of lawyers was Selden. Some days before his death he sent for Archbishop Ussher, and said, "I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, and my study is filled with books and manuscripts on various subjects; yet at this moment I

can recollect nothing in them all on which I can rest my soul, save one from the sacred Scriptures, which lies much on my spirit. It is this: 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'" Nor is it only at the close of the pilgrimage that the hope full of immortality is a pearl of great price. Without it, life is so transient that every invention is a melancholy plaything, and the vastest acquirements are a laborious futility. But the student who toils for immortality need never want a motive in his work; and, however sad some of his discoveries may be, the sage who knows the Saviour will always have in his knowledge an overplus of joy.

July 21, 1850.

VI.

THE PLAYHOUSE AND THE PALACE.

READ ECCLES. II. 1-11.

"Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth." . . . "I said of laughter, It is mad." . . . "I gave myself to wine, yet acquainting myself with wisdom." . . . "I made me great works." . . . "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit."

THIS passage describes a mental fever. The writer tells how, by quitting the wholesome climes of piety, his spirit caught a deadly chill, and how, in the morbid excitement which followed, he tossed to and fro, and tried every change,—burning in the breeze, and shivering in the sun,—distracted till he gained his wish, and disgusted to find that what he wished was not the thing he needed. First mad after wisdom, then came a surfeit of learning—a glut of information, and he denounced much wisdom as much grief. He would try frivolity. He would take things easily, and, as far as might be, cheerily. "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure." He would skim the surface of things, and snatch the joys which divert the mind, but which do not fatigue the brain: he would be a wit, a

man of humour, a merry monarch. And he was. But his own mirth soon made him melancholy. Like phosphorus on a dead man's face, he felt that it was a trick, a lie; and, like the laugh of a hyæna among the tombs, he found that the worldling's frolic can never reanimate the joys which guilt has slain and buried. "I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?" So, after a moody interval, he bethought him how to blend the two. Philosophy by itself had failed, and folly by itself had also failed. But how would it do to combine them,—the sprightly with the grave, the material luxury and the mental vivacity, the wisdom and the wine? Yes, into his ivy-wreath he would twine the laurel, and the flat potions of philosophy he would enliven with social effervescence. "I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine (yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom), and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life." But this also proved a failure. "Wine, wisdom, wit," became a mutually destructive mixture, and the experimenter abjured them, in order to try the pleasures of taste. Sculpture and painting were scarcely known to the Hebrews; but in gardening, music, and architecture, they were good proficients, and to these the sovereign now directed his sumptuous ingenuity. Like a petrified dream, the palace stood forth in all the freshness of virgin marble, and in all the pride of its airy pinnacles. In the wilderness waters brake forth; and, spreading their molten coolness over the dust of yesterday, artificial lakes surrounded

artificial isles; whilst from the fragrant thickets of the terraced gardens, the dulcet sounds of foreign minstrelsy descended where the royal barge lay floating, or through the lattice wafted into the banquet-hall their hints of superhuman glory,—till the vessels of gold and silver sparkled like a galaxy, and the repast was enchanted into a Divine refection; and in proud apotheosis the monarch smiled upon his guests from a godlike throne. "I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I made me pools of water to water the groves of trees. I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and musical instruments of every sort. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that I had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

Solomon tried mirth and abjured it. And, perhaps, the most melancholy life is that of the professed merrymaker. You remember the answer of the wobegone stranger, when the physician advised him to go and hear the great comedian of the day,—"You should go and hear Matthews." "Alas! sir, I am Matthews!" Akin to which is the account of one who for many years manufactured mirth for the great metropolis, the writer of diverting stories, and the soul of every festive party which was able to secure his presence.[1] But even when keeping all the company in a blaze of hilarity, his own heart was broken; and at one of these boisterous scenes, glimpsing his own pale

[1] Theodore Hook.

visage in the glass, he exclaimed, "Ah! I see how it is. I look just as I am—done up in mind, in body, and purse," —and went home to sicken and die. And who can read this passage without recalling one who was, sixty years ago, the most dazzling speaker in our British Parliament, whose bow had as many strings as life has pleasures,—the wit, the orator, the dramatist, the statesman, the boon-companion and the confidant of princes?[1] But when "wine" had quenched the "wisdom;" when riot had bloated the countenance, and debt had dispersed the friends of the man of pleasure; when in splendid rows his books stood on the shelves of the brokers, and the very portrait of his wife had disappeared,—on a wretched pallet, trembling for fear of a prison, the gloomy, forsaken worldling closed his eyes on a scene which he was loath to quit, but which showed no wish to detain him—leaving "no profit under the sun," and without any prospect beyond it.

Nor can we promise a satisfaction more solid to the godless virtuoso. Each alternate year the public is startled with some grand explosion. A great tower of Babel comes toppling down. There is a tinkle in the belfry—a premonitory jangling of the crazy chimes—a crackling of the timbers, a thunderous down-pouring of bricks and beams and tiles and plaster, and through the dust and smoke the groans of the crushed inmates are heard, stifled and soon stilled: and then come the excavators—the collectors who carry off the curiosities to decorate other toy-shops, and the builders who buy the bricks, in order to construct new Babels elsewhere.

[1] Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

Not long ago a wealthy compatriot erected such a palace for his pride, and reared it with such impatience that the workmen plied their labours night and day. When finished, "a wall, nearly twenty miles in circumference, surrounded it. Within this circle scarcely any visitors were allowed to pass. In sullen grandeur the owner dwelt alone, shunning converse with the world around. Majesty itself was desirous of visiting this wonderful domain, but was refused admittance. . . . Its interior was fitted with all the splendour which art and wealth could create. Gold and silver cups and vases were so numerous that they dazzled the eye; and looking round at the cabinets and candelabra and ornaments which decorated the apartment, was like standing in the treasury of an Eastern prince."[1] But a hundred thousand pounds a year failed to support this magnificence, and the gates which "refused admittance to a monarch were thrust open by a sheriff's officer;" and whilst its architect pined in unpitied solitude, the gorgeous structure was pulled down by its new owner. More frequently, however, it is the structure which stands, and it is the architect who becomes the ruin. Many of you have visited Versailles. As you stood upon its terraces, or surveyed its pictures furlong after furlong, or wandered among its enchanted fountains, did it strike you, How fresh and splendid is Versailles; how insignificant is now its author! Or did you think of that gloomy day when in one of its chambers lay dying the monarch who has identified Versailles with his royal revelries, and near the silken couch a throng of courtiers lingered,

[1] *The Mirage of Life*, an excellent publication of the Tract Society.

not in tears—not anxious to detain his spirit—not sedulous to soothe the last moments of mortal anguish; but wearying till their old master would make an end of it and die, that they might rush away and congratulate his successor?[1] And did you think that thus it is with every one who layeth up treasure for himself, and who is not rich towards God? Did you think of him who said to his soul, when he had built his larger barns, "Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" and to whom God said, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall these things be?"

What is it then? Shall we denounce learning, genius, wit? Shall we proscribe architecture and all the arts? For this some have contended, and under pretence of piety they have sought to become barbarians. But, O man, who hath required this at thy hands? It is the work of God's Spirit to sanctify taste and consecrate talent; and that alone is excessive which is not given to God. In "walking about Zion," we must ever admire the noble "bulwarks" reared by Lardner and Butler, and the other defenders of the common faith, as well as the "towers" of orthodoxy erected by the learned labours of Owen, and Haldane, and Magee, and other mighty engineers; nor less the "palaces" which at once adorn the city and commemorate the genius of Watts, and Howe, and Chalmers, and Vinet. Nor is there any reason why wit should always be "mad." Religion may be sprightly,

[1] See the death-scene of Louis xv. at the opening of Carlyle's *French Revolution.*

and dulness may be undevout. A Horne or a Cowper may be permitted to answer a fool according to his folly; and when, with the tender precision of a Tell, the polished shafts of Wilberforce split in twain an opponent's argument, but never "hurt his head,"[1] you could not wish fanaticism to destroy a weapon which religion guides so wisely. Though pride may be the busiest architect, let us not forget that piety and philanthropy have been great builders also. And though sensuality may abuse the arts, let us not forget how often to its youthful inmates music has helped to endear the earthly home, and how much devotion is indebted to "the service of song in the house of the Lord." Let us not forget that almighty Artist who every spring paints new landscapes on the earth, and every evening new ones in the sky—whose sculptures are the snowy clouds and everlasting hills—and whose harp of countless strings includes each note, from a harebell's tinkle to the "organic swell" of ocean's thunder.

What is it then? The "instrument of righteousness," when not "yielded to God," becomes an idol; and every idol is at once a curse and a crime.

[1] Ps. cxli. 5. See the sketch of Wilberforce, in Sir James Stephen's *Historical Essays*, and in Lord Brougham's *Statesmen*, first series.

July 28, 1850.

VII.

THE MONUMENT.

READ ECCLES. II. 12-23.

"There is no perpetual remembrance of the wise more than of the fool." "Who knoweth whether his successor shall be a wise man or a fool?"

THE noblest renown is posthumous fame; and the most refined ambition is the desire of such fame. A vulgar mind may thirst for immediate popularity; and very moderate talent, dexterously managed, may win for the moment the hosannahs of the million. But it is a Horace or a Milton, a Socrates or a Sidney, who can listen without bitterness to plaudits heaped on feebler rivals, and calmly anticipate the day when posterity will do justice to the powers or the achievements of which he is already conscious. And of this more exalted ambition it would appear that Solomon had felt the stirrings. When he looked on the temple and the cedar palace, and still more when he thought of his literary exploits, his songs and his proverbs, and his lectures in science, the *Non omnis moriar* was a thought as natural as it was pleasing, and from the sense of flagging powers and the sight of a fail-

ing body he gladly took refuge in the promise of posthumous immortality. But even that cold comfort was entirely frozen in the thought which followed. From the lofty pinnacle to which, as a philosophic historian, he had ascended, Solomon could look down and see not only the fallibility of his coevals, but the forgetfulness of the generations following. He knew that there had often been great men in the world; but he could not hide it from himself, how little these great men had grown already, and how infinitesimal the greatest would become, if the world should only last a few centuries longer. And so far, Solomon was right. Few things would be more pathetic than if we had some micrometer for measuring great men's memories,—some means for ascertaining the decimal of a second which those great names subtend in our historic firmament, who filled their living age with lustre. Even Solomon's own,—intellectually the brightest of a bygone dispensation, and with all the advantage of the Bible telescope to bring it near,—how little it enters into the actual thought of this modern world! What a tiny spark it twinkles through the foggy atmosphere of this material time! Had a life in the hearts of future men been all his immortality, how little worth the purchase! and how much wiser than their philosophic monarch were those "fools" in Jerusalem who took no thought to add this cubit to their age!

So, brethren, it is natural to wish to be remembered when gone; and as a substitute for the highest motive, or a succour to other motives, it is well to think of the generation following. But, as it usually flatters worldly men,

this posthumous fame is a fallacy.[1] "A living dog is better than a dead lion." Amidst the importunate solicitations of daily business, many of us must accuse ourselves of unfaithfulness to the dead; and when tranquil moments call up their familiar images, we marvel how we can deal so treacherously with the great and good departed. Vanished from our view, expunged from our correspondence, dropped from our very prayers, no longer expected as visitors in our homes,—it is marvellous how faint and intermitting their memory has grown; and we upbraid our ungrateful fancy that it preserves so little space for old benefactors, and the once-cherished friends of our bosom. But the same fate awaits ourselves; we, too, are going hence, and when we are gone,

> "A few will weep a little while,
> Then bless our memory with a smile."

One or two may cling to it with tender fondness, while existence lasts; but even with friends affectionate and true, tenderness will soon soften into resignation, and resignation will subside into contentment, and contentment will dull away into sheer forgetfulness; and it will only be on some rare occasion,—some wakeful night, when memory is holding a vigil of All-Souls, or when a torn letter, or an inscription in a book, or a name carved

[1] "Are not all things born to be forgotten? In truth, it was a sore vexation to me when I saw, as the wise man saw of old, that whatever I could hope to perform must necessarily be of very temporary duration: and if so, why do it? Let me see! What have I done already? I have learnt Welsh, and have translated the songs of Ab Gwilym; I have also rendered the old book of Danish ballads into English metre. Good! Have I done enough to secure myself a reputation of a thousand years? Well, but what's a thousand years after all, or twice a thousand years? Woe is me! I may just as well sit still."—LAVENGRO.

on the beechen tree conjures up the past, "and a spirit stands before you,"—that the fountain of early love will flow anew, and you will pay the tribute of the long-suspended tear. But even that will end. A race will arise that knows not Joseph, and to which Joseph's friends will not be able to transfer their attachment; and when a fourth or a fifth generation comes upon the stage, so dim will be the name, and so diluted will be the interest in it, that the youth will be more concerned for the loss of a favourite hound than for the extinction of his grandsire's memory.

But if this be the phantom for which the worldling toils and sighs, there is a posthumous fame which is no illusion. If there be no eternal remembrance of the world's wise men any more than of its fools, it is otherwise with the wise ones of the heavenly kingdom. God has so arranged it that "the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance." "They that," in His sight, "are wise, shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Great men may covet admiration, but good men crave affection. Admiration is the state-room, formal and rarely used; but to be admitted into the affections is to be domiciled in the heart's own home,—to live where lives the soul itself. And into this inmost shrine of good men's souls God admits all the holy; nay, with reverence speaking it, He admits them into His own. The love of Jehovah is a sanctuary where every holy being has a home. But not content with giving to the just made perfect, the immortality of His own unchanging love, a

gracious God secures them the attachment of congenial minds; and at this instant there is not in all the universe a holy being but God has found for it a resting-place in the love of other holy beings, and that not temporarily, but for all eternity. The only posthumous fame that is truly permanent is the memory of God; and the only deathless names are theirs for whose living persons He has found a place in His own love, and in the love of holy beings like-minded with Himself. Many a casket has been broken, and the gems of fine fancy have been scattered on the world, and the name of the self-immolating genius is now forgotten; but that box of ointment which the weeping penitent crushed over the feet of Jesus, will pour its fragrance through all time; for wherever there is a Gospel the Lord Jesus has secured that there shall be spread the story. And so—war, wisdom, wit,—these three have all made deep indentations on the mind of man; and some deeds have been so brave, and some inventions so beautiful, and some sayings so brilliant, that people vowed they never would be forgotten. But, alas! it was the fragile imagination of sinful man, and it has long ago disintegrated. It was the soft and viscid memory of selfish man, and new interests and new objects have since flowed in and filled up the oozy record. But although we dare not say that any thought of earth is so sublime as to merit a record in heaven, on the highest authority we know that no act of faith is so insignificant but it secures a registration there. And although, fearful of posthumous flattery, the dying Howards of our species may direct, "Place a sun-dial on my grave, and let me be

forgotten,"—they cannot expunge their labours of love from the book of remembrance, and they will never be forgotten by God.

But even beyond posthumous fame, most men would like to be perpetuated in well-doing and affectionate children. And here again, a gloomy foreboding darkened the mind of Solomon. He had greatly extended his hereditary kingdom; he had amassed an unprecedented fortune; he had built such palaces as only Eastern extravagance had dared to dream; he had covered his name with glory as a statesman, and a lawgiver, and a sage; and all this glory,—these palaces,—yon piles of treasure, —that splendid empire,—the whole was such a prize that if he felt sadness in leaving it, he also felt anxiety about transmitting it. He had a son; but, from expressions here escaping, it would almost seem as if Rehoboam already betrayed the senselessness and arrogance which were afterwards to make him the detestation of his subjects, and the butt of his neighbours. The heathen marriages and the on-goings of the father, at once unkingly and ungodly, were destined to yield their bitter fruits in the son; and it is possible that the backslider already felt punished in foreseeing all the mischief coming on the kingdom through the pride and the blunders of this wayward youth. "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity."

Let those be very thankful who feel that they are better off than Solomon. You have not a sceptre, a title, a vast income to bequeath; but you have well-doing children. By their industry and mutual affection, above all, by promising appearances of personal piety, you are encouraged to hope that those who come after you will be an honour to your name. What a mercy! Solomon would have given his sceptre in exchange for your son. But why should not this mercy be yet more frequent? It is true that "grace does not run in the blood, though sin does." But it is also true that God makes His grace more gracious by often causing it to run in the channel of the natural affections. "The promise is unto you and to your children." And where there is a pious affection, the best gifts will be those we shall covet most earnestly for its objects. Where parental affection is also devout, it will prompt the prayer which David offered at once for himself and for Solomon: "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son." And in that pious affection the Lord sympathizes, and such parental intercessions He delights to hear.

And although, when we think what sort of life Solomon for a long period led; when we reflect that Rehoboam's boyhood and youth were spent in the lap of luxury, and amid scenes of the most extravagant revelry; when we consider that a polygamist like Solomon can never have a home, and a child like Rehoboam can have no such playmates as are found in an undivided family; when we recall the idolatry and impiety to which his early years had been inured, and remember how bad was the example

which his own father set him,—we can scarcely wonder that the son of Solomon proved a heartbreak to his father and a stigma on his line; still we are not the less persuaded, that where there is faithfulness to God as well as affection to one's children; where there are earnest prayer and a corresponding pattern; and, especially, where both parents are of one mind, and agreed as touching this thing, God will do it for them, and the promise still hold true, "to you and to your seed after you." The "entail of the covenant" is largely borne out by religious biography, and our Churches are mainly composed of the pious children of Christian parents. Happy they who, instead of a tablet in the churchyard wall, are thus commemorated by polished stones in the living temple![1]

[1] Isaiah liv. 11-13.

September 22, 1850.

VIII.

THE CLOCK OF DESTINY.

READ ECCLES. III. 1-15.

"To everything there is a season. . . . . In the heart of everything God hath set its era."[1]

ACCORDING to the mood of the spectator the same phenomena will exert a depressing or a reviving influence; and according to the bias of the reasoner the same facts will be adduced for purposes the most opposite. If we were sure that in this passage Solomon was giving the matured opinion of his latest and penitent life, the text would be a lesson of resignation derived from the absolute sovereignty and all-controlling providence of God: but if, as we have all along held, Solomon writes these verses somewhat in sympathy with his former self; if he be recalling for wise purposes the reasonings and surmisings of the days of his vanity, we should be prepared to find intermingled with the sublime theology of this section a tincture of fatalism. Accordingly, in the ninth and tenth verses we read, "What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail

[1] Verse 11, עולם *eternity, duration,* etc. : LXX. αἰών.

which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it." 'This universe is moving in a groove of adamant. Man's activity is a make-believe—an imposition on himself; for the wheel spins round equally fast whether the blue-bottle push it forward or backward. What profit is there in human industry? It is the unproductive travail to which the offended Creator has doomed His sinful creature;—the ploughing of the sand, the weaving of the air, the manufacture of elaborate nonentities.' And yet, so true are the facts which this section notes, and so solemn the inferences from them which forced themselves on the mind of the royal reasoner, that few texts contain the germs of a grander theology. Passing over the impotence and helplessness of the creature, he saw how glorious was that Omnipotence which held in hand the guiding reins of ponderous orbs and mighty incidents, and at the predestined moment would bring the chariot of His sovereignty to its triumphal goal in the far-off eternity. He saw how vast is that Wisdom which from the beginning had planned the great year of existence, and planned it so complete that nothing needed to be supplemented nor superseded, but through its cycle inconceivable the universe moved on from the moment of its starting, ever waxing, ever waning, and through its summer and winter of uncounted ages circling round to its successive springs. "He hath made everything beautiful in his time, and in the heart of everything he hath set an eternity: so that no man can find out from beginning to end any work that God maketh—any process that God conducteth. I know that whatsoever God

doeth, it shall be for ever. Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been: and God brings back the past."

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." As if he had said, Mortality is a huge timepiece wound up by the Almighty Maker; and after he has set it agoing nothing can stop it till the angel swears that time shall be no longer. But here it ever vibrates and ever advances—ticking one child of Adam into existence, and ticking another out. Now it gives the whirr of warning, and the world may look out for some great event; and presently it fulfils its warning, and rings in a noisy revolution. But there! as its index travels on so resolute and tranquil, what tears and raptures attend its progress! It was only another wag of the sleepless pendulum: but it was fraught with destiny, and a fortune was made—a heart was broken—an empire fell. We cannot read the writing on the mystic cogs as they are coming slowly up; but each of them is coming on God's errand, and carries in its graven brass a Divine decree. Now, however—now, that the moment is past, we know; and in the fulfilment we can read the fiat. This instant was to say to Solomon, "Be born!" this other was to say to Solomon in all his glory, "Die!" That instant was to "plant" Israel in Palestine; that other was to "pluck him up." And thus inevitable, inexorable, the great clock of human destiny moves on, till a mighty hand shall grasp its heart and hush for ever its pulse of iron.

See how fixed, how fated is each vicissitude! how independent of human control! There is "a time to be born," and however much a man may dislike the era on which his existence is cast, he cannot help himself: that time is his, and he must make the most of it. Milton need not complain that his lot is fallen on evil days; for these are *his* days, and he can have no other. Roger Bacon and Galileo need not grudge their precocious being, that they have been prematurely launched into the age of inquisitors and knowledge-quenching monks—for this age was made to make them. And so with the time to die. Voltaire need not offer half his fortune to buy six weeks' reprieve; for if the appointed moment has arrived, it cannot pass into eternity without taking the sceptic with it. And even good Hezekiah—his tears and prayers would not have turned the shadow backward, had that moment of threatened death been the moment of God's intention. Yes, there is a time to die; and though we speak of an untimely end, no one ever died a moment sooner than God designed, nor lived a moment longer. And so there is "a time to plant." The impulse comes on the man of fortune, and he lays out his spacious lawn, and studs it with massive trees; and he plans his garden, and in the sod embeds the rarest and richest flowers, or he piles up little mounts of blossomed shrubbery, till the place is dazzled with bright tints and dizzy with perfume. And that impulse fades away, and in the fickleness of sated opulence the whole is rooted up, and converted into wilderness again. Or by his own or a successor's fall, the region is doomed to destruction; and when strangling

nettles have choked the geraniums and the lilies, and, crowded into atrophy, the lean plantations grow tall and branchless, the axe of an enterprising purchaser clears away the dank thickets, and his ploughshare turns up the weedy parterre. There is a time when to interfere with disease is to destroy; when to touch the patient is to take his life: and there is a time when the simplest medicine will effect a marvellous cure. There is a time when the invader is too happy to dismantle the fortress which so long held him in check; but by and by, when he needs it as a bulwark to his own frontiers, with all his might he builds it up again. Nor can any one fix a date and say, I shall spend that day merrily, or I must spend it mournfully. The day fixed for the wedding may prove the day for the funeral; and the ship which was to bring back the absent brother, may only bring his coffin. On the other hand, the day we had destined for mourning, God may turn to dancing, and may gird it with irresistible gladness. Nor are earth's monuments perpetual. The statue reared one day will be thrown into the river another, and the trophy commenced by one conqueror shall owe its completion to his rival and supplanter. "There is a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing." "There is a time when the fondness of friendship bestows its caresses, and receives them in return with reciprocal sincerity and delight: and a time when the ardour cools; when professions fail; when the friend of our bosom's love proves false and hollow-hearted, and the sight of him produces only the sigh and tear of bitter recollection. We refrain from embracing,

because our embrace is not returned."[1] "There is a time to get, and a time to lose." There is a time when every enterprise succeeds; when, as if he were a Midas, whatsoever the prosperous merchant touches, is instantly gold; then comes a time when all is adverse—when flotillas sink, when ports are closed, and each fine opening only proves another and a tantalizing failure. And so there is "a time to keep, and a time to cast away." There is a time when in the cutting blast the traveller is fain to wrap his cloak more closely around him: a time when in the torrid beam he is thankful to be rid of it. There is a time when we cannot keep too carefully the scrip or satchel which contains the provision for our journey: a time when, to outrun the pursuing assassin, or to bribe the red-armed robber, we fling it down without a scruple. It was a time to keep when the sea was smooth, and Rome's ready market was waiting for the corn of Egypt; but it was a time to cast the wheat into the sea, when the angry ocean clamoured for the lives of thrice a hundred passengers.[2] There is "a time to rend, and a time to sew:" a time when calamity threatens or grief has come, and we feel constrained to rend our apparel and betoken our inward woe; a time when the peril has withdrawn, or the fast is succeeded by a festival, when it is equally congruous to remove the symbols of sorrow. There is "a time to keep silence"—a time when we see that our neighbour's grief is great, and we will not sing songs to a heavy heart;—a time when, in the abatement of anguish, a word of sympathy may prove a word in

[1] Wardlaw *in loco.* [2] Acts xxvii. 38.

season;—a time when to remonstrate with the transgressor, would be to reprove a madman, or, like the pouring of vinegar on nitre, would be to excite a fiery explosion against ourselves; but a time will come when, in the dawn of repentance or the sobering down of passion, he will feel that faithful are the wounds of a friend. "There is a time to love, and a time to hate." There is a period when, from identity of pursuit, or from the spell of some peculiar attraction, a friend is our all in all, and our idolatrous spirits live and move and have their being in him; but with riper years or changing character, the spell dissolves, and we marvel at ourselves, that we could ever find zest in insipidity or fascination in vulgarity. And just as individuals cannot control their hatred and their love; as the soul must go forth to what is amiable, and revolt from what is odious—so nations cannot regulate their pacifications and their conflicts. But just at the moment when they are pledging a perpetual alliance, an apple of discord is thrown in, and to avenge an insulted flag, or settle a disputed boundary, or maintain the tottering balance of power, wager of battle is forthwith joined; and where early summer saw the mingled tribes tilting in the tournay, or masquerading on the fields of cloth of gold, autumn sets on unreaped harvests, and blackened forests, and silent villages. And conversely: when the clouds of battle frown on one another, and there is no prospect but long and sanguinary campaigns, a magazine explodes, an heir-apparent dies, or two daring spirits of the opposing hosts transfer the issue to the point of their single swords; and with the

awful incubus so suddenly thrown off, the knit brows of either nation relax into an expansive smile, and the year destined for mutual extermination is spent in blended jubilee.

Such is the fact. Such are the unquestionable alternations in human affairs; and thus accurately do occasions and events fit into one another. So much of mechanism does there appear to be in the ongoings of mortality, and thus helpless seems man as the maker of his own destiny. But lifting our eyes from the mundane side of it, what shall we say concerning Him who is the Contriver and Controller of it all?

And should it not be enough to say that God has so arranged it? To Him are owing all this variety and vicissitude, and yet all this order and uniformity. And is not it enough that He so wills it? "Shall the thing formed say to him who made it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

But not only has God made everything; there is a beauty in this arrangement where all is fortuitous to us, but all is fixed by Him. "He hath made everything beautiful in its time;" and that season must be beautiful which to infinite Love and Wisdom seems the best.

Amongst modern processes one of the most beautiful is the art of taking sun-pictures. Instead of the artist copying the object, he lets the object copy itself; and if the light were profuse enough, and properly adjusted, the picture would be as true as noon, and as minute as the original. Now, would not it be a curious thing if, from a station high enough, one could take a vast sun-picture of this city—this island—this hemisphere?—showing pre-

cisely how, at the selfsame instant, all its inhabitants are occupied?—where every one of them is this moment posted, and what each one of them is doing? And would it not be very curious, if along with this there were preserved a similar picture of the selfsame people and their employments, at a given instant ten or twenty years ago? But most curious of all would it not be, if some one could show a photographic panorama of how it will appear ten or twenty years hereafter?—projecting every person in his proper place?—exhibiting the groups which have meanwhile gathered round him or melted from his side?—the changes which have passed over himself, or which he has been the means of inducing over others? But, my friends, there is one repository where such pictures are preserved—far more exact and vivid than the finest sun-painting ever drawn; there is not a day in our world's past history but its minutest image lives in the memory of God, and more than that, there is not a day in all the coming history of our world but its portrait, precise and clear, is already present to the Divine foreknowledge. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the creation;" and, so to speak, each day that dawns, though its dawning include an earthquake, a battle, or a deluge—each day that dawns, however many it surprises, is no surprise to Him who sees the end from the beginning, and who, in each evolving incident, sees but the fulfilment of "His determinate counsel,"—the translation into fact of one other omniscient picture of the future.

And which is best? "A mighty maze and all without a plan?"—a world whose progress takes even Providence by

surprise, and whose future stands before even the Infinite Mind in no clearer outline than those dim guesses and dusky foreshadowings to which even shrewd mortals attain?—or a world of which the successive epochs shall only be the outworking of a purpose so wise and good from the first that it cannot be changed for the better?—the realization in persons and actions and results of that series of prescient maps or plans whose aggregate will constitute the optimism of the universe?—as we read in verse 11, "God hath set its destined duration in the heart of everything." To every incident and event He has not only given its immediate effect, but also its remoter errand afar in the future. Each such incident or event may be regarded as a mechanism wound up to travel so far or accomplish so much, so that, till its course is finished—till the beginning comes round to the end—no man can say positively what was God's first purpose in it. When the young German grew earnest, you would have said there was some hope that he might next be enlightened; but when the earnest youth became a monk, you would have said, Farewell, light! farewell, all hope of the gospel! And yet Luther's entombment in the Erfurth convent was to be the resurrection of apostolical religion. In the heart of that little incident God had set the Reformation. When a king arose in Egypt who knew not Joseph, and who hated and tormented the Hebrews, you would have said, There's an end of the old promise. This order to exterminate the Hebrew children will soon annihilate Abraham's family. And any Jew who had been gathered to his fathers at the time they were slaying all the male children,

would have been apt to die despairing of his nation's prospects. And yet that murderous edict was to be the deliverance of Israel. In the heart of that despot's decree God had set the exodus. And to the sublime theology of Solomon the only addition we would make is that evangelic supplement: "All things work together for good to them that love God; to them which are the called according to his purpose." Their path is thickly strewn with incidents. Of these, some are for the present not joyous but grievous; nevertheless, in their heart God hath set the peaceful fruits of righteousness. They are seeds with a thorny husk, and they hurt the pilgrim's naked feet; but when next he passes that way, or when Christiana with her children follows him, they have germinated into bright flowers or cool overshadowing trees. And they will not perish. The incidents along the believer's path are seeds of influence, scattered by the hand of God. And sanctification of some sort is the germ which He has set in the heart of every one of them. Nor can they die till they have thus developed. They cannot perish and pass away till the Christian has set in his heart the lesson which God has set in theirs.

The works of God are distinguished by *opportuneness of development and precision of purpose.* There is a season for each of them, and each comes in its season. All of them have a function to fulfil, and they fulfil it. To which (verse 14) the Preacher adds, that they are all of their kind *consummate*—so perfect that no improvement can be made, and, left to themselves, they will be perpetual. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be

for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." How true is this regarding God's greatest work, Redemption! What more could He have done to make it a great salvation than what He has already done? or what feature of the glorious plan could we afford to want? And now that He has Himself pronounced it a "finished" work, what is there that man can put to it?—what is there he dare take from it? And in doing it He has done it "for ever." The merits of Immanuel are as mighty this evening as they were on the day of Pentecost. Jesus is as able to save us if we come unto God by Him now, as He was to save Zaccheus, and "Legion," and Mary Magdalene. It is into the same bright heaven that these merits and that mercy will take us as that into which the white-robed company has already gone; and by a process as swift as that which translated the dying thief, these merits could transport any sinner amongst us from the verge of perdition to paradise.

Of these theological conclusions the 15th verse is the last. "That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been, and God requireth—God resuscitates and repeats—the past." There is a *uniformity* in the Divine procedure. True to itself, amidst all the diversity of incidents which chequer an individual's history, there are certain great principles from which Infinite Wisdom never deviates. In the natural world there is always a summer and a winter, a seed-time and a harvest, a day succeeded by the night. And in the moral world sin will always be sorrow; principle will, in the long-run, always prove the highest expediency; the sinner will

always, sooner or later, be filled with the fruit of his own devices; and sooner or later there will always be a reward to the righteous. And amidst all the diversities of national character, and all the vicissitudes of civil history, there is an essential identity,—variety enough to spread romantic fascination over the page of Thucydides or Robertson, but such identity that the fifteenth Psalm, or a single section of this book, is the abridgement of all history. Nor will there be any material change till the story is ended. Hundreds of millions may yet be born, but they will all repeat the past. A few may be more clever and a few may be more virtuous than any that have heretofore been; and, alas! a few may be more abandoned, more desperately wicked. But whether for good or evil, they will all be human—human in their goodness, human in their guilt. There will not be a Gabriel among them all, nor will there be a Lucifer; and in dealing with that humanity the principles of the Divine procedure will be as uniform as the material itself. With the reprobate it will be calls and refusals, warnings and resistings, startling providences and sullen stupor, momentary alarms, followed by deeper slumber; and then, "he who being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy." And then, on the other side, the converse process. "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified."[1] And thus, through all the operations of nature, providence, and

[1] Rom. viii. 29, 30.

grace, "that which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been, and God repeateth that which is past."

One final reflection from the whole passage. Some of you, my hearers, may read the description of mortality here recorded; and you may give a vehement assent to its truth. "Yes, it is all a masquerade of the same everlasting events wearing new visors; it is all mutation without novelty, and change without real variety. The world itself is a gourd whose root the worm is already gnawing—a palace whose quicksand basis the flood is already sapping."

> "What is this passing scene?
> A peevish April day!
> A little sun, a little rain,
> And then night sweeps along the plain,
> And all things fade away."[1]

So be it. But if so, how should it endear that state where all is perfection, and all is permanence! To everything "under heaven" there is a fixed but a fleeting season; but to those who are in heaven the moments are not thus precarious, nor the seasons thus short. Still better: there are many of the things for which there is a "time" on earth for which there is no time there. To those who are born into that better country there is no time to "die." Those that are "planted" in God's house on high, shall never be "plucked up," but shall flourish there for ever. There, there is nothing to hurt nor to destroy, but perpetual "health," and lasting as eternity. There, the walls

[1] Kirke White.

of strong salvation shall never be "broken down." There, there is no "time to weep;" for sorrow and sighing are for ever fled away:—no "time to mourn;" for when they left this vale of tears the days of their mourning ended. There, it is all a time of "peace," and all a "time to love." There, monuments are never defaced nor overthrown; for those who are pillars in the temple above, with the new name written on them, shall go out no more. There, in the sanctity of the all-superseding relationship, there will be no severance; but those friends of earth, who have been joined again in the bonds of angelhood, will never need to give the parting embrace; for they shall be ever with one another, and ever with the Lord.

September 29, 1850.

IX.

THE DUNGEON.

READ ECCLES. III. 16-22; IV. 1-3.

"Behold! the tears of the oppressed!"

WHEN composing himself for a contented life, a shriek of anguish reached the monarch's ear and startled his repose. It was a cry from the victims of tyranny and oppression, and as he listened it grew more articulate, and it filled him at once with sympathy for others, and solicitude for himself. "I saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter." How is it possible for a prince to "eat and drink, and enjoy the fruit of his labour," whilst the wail of evicted peasants and houseless orphans is louder than all the music of his orchestra? For a moment he felt relief in recalling the future judgment. "I said in mine heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked." But what care they for the

judgment? What fear of God is before their eyes? So brutish are they that they neither look forward nor look up; but are content with their daily ravin. Yes, beasts, I half believe you. Your grossness almost converts me to your own materialism. I wish that God would manifest you to yourselves, and show you how brutish you are living, and how brute-like you will die. Yes, tyrants and oppressors, you have a power at present; but you will fall like the beasts that perish. You and they will all go to one place,—will all resolve into promiscuous clay: for "all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." And as for your very soul, so unfeeling, so undevout as you have been, what is there to mark your spirit more aspiring, more empyrean, than the downward and dissolving spirit of the beast? No: there are sharks in the ocean, and wolves in the forest, and eagles in the air; and there are tyrants on thrones, and there are tormentors in many a cottage. It is painful to know the misery they are daily inflicting, and, perhaps, I myself may yet become their prey. But they must not spoil this transient life-luxury; they shall not fill me with vain compassion or fantastic fears. After all, there is nothing better than to "rejoice in one's own works," and be, as long as one can, oblivious of surrounding misery,—regulating his own movements and rejoicing in his own resources. "For that is his present portion; and who can reveal the future?" Said I so? Ah! vain resolution and unavailing vow! That cry of tortured innocence is in my ear again. I hear the groans of the victim, and I see the tears of the oppressed. And my heart grows

sick, and I wish that I were dead, or rather that I had never been born into a world where all proceeds so sadly.

Very ghastly is the picture which our world presents when we look at it as the scene of injustice and cruelty; and very painful is the view it gives us of our arbitrary and oppressive human nature. Could we only see what God is daily seeing, and hear what God is daily hearing, we would be apt to join with Solomon in praising the dead who are already dead, and who are past our pain or danger. For, even now, in this noon of the nineteenth century, which, in the ear Eternal, is the loudest of earth's voices?—which is the loudest in the ear of History? Is it the psalm of thanksgiving? Is it the harvest-hymn of ripe fruition and cheerful prospects? Is it the new song of redeemed and regenerate adoration? What is the speech which day utters unto day,—the watchword which one terrestrial night passes on to another? Alas! it is lamentation and mourning. It is the music of breaking hearts; it is the noise of the oppressor's millstone, whose grinding never waxes low. It is the sighing of the prisoner whom the despot has doomed; the groaning of the captive whom lucre has enslaved, or whom superstition means to immolate. That heavy plunge far out on the moon-lit Bosporus is the close of one household tragedy; in that sudden shriek and weltering fall on the Venetian pavement ends another. These cries of horror announce the funeral of some Ashanti prince, and the wholesale slaughter which soaks his tomb; whilst from Austrian dungeons and Ural mines, the groans of patriots confess the power of tyrants. And even if the modern surface

were silent, history cannot be deaf to the voices underneath. For, wheresoever she sets her foot, there is a stifled sob,—that cry which nothing can deaden or keep down,—the quenchless cry of blood,—blood like Abel's, blood like Stephen's, blood like the Saviour's own; and as if the turf were all one altar, and every pore a several tongue, she hears the slain of centuries invoking Heaven's pity,—Bethlehem's innocents, Roman martyrs, Bartholomew victims; and the ground begins to quake as the muffled chorus waxes louder: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"[1]

There are few deeds of kindness which are not sufficiently notorious,—few acts of munificence or mercy which the world's right hand has not hinted to its left. But when History begins her sterner survey,—when from Popedoms and dynasties, and republics even, she lifts the gilt and purple canopy,—what sights of paltry vengeance or ingenious cruelty offend the reluctant gaze! What secrets of the prison-house do Bastiles and Inquisitions, San Angelos, and London Towers disclose, as the daylight of inquiry breaks in, and the earthen floor gives up its slain, and the stone wall gives out its skeletons! There are depths of the ocean to which the plummet of the mariner, and the dredge of the naturalist, and the exploring foot of the diver, have never travelled down; but even there, as she takes her telescope, History sees the bones thick strewn of the hapless men whom the buccaneer, and the pirate, and the flying slaver, have flung

[1] Rev. vi. 9-12.

quick into the deep; and there are dim recesses of old story from which no gleams of humanity or tenderness beam forth; but even thence, by the light of Egyptian brick-kilns, and Druid bale-fires, and Assyrian conflagrations, we are reminded that the anguish of his fellow has always been an amusement to the warrior and a solace to the priest. So that, morally regarded, and taking in the continuous survey of all places and all times, green may be the colour of the globe, but red is the livery of man. Babel may have split the dialects of earth into a thousand tongues; but, amidst them all, the old vernacular of anguish still survives. And in the music of the spheres its Maker may have given to our world its proper note; but it is a minor tune which is ever sung by its inhabitants, by neighbour nations, and by the several classes of society, evermore to one another, crying, Woe, woe, woe!

Such oppressions Solomon beheld, and more especially judicial oppressions,—cruelty in the cloak of law (iii. 16) —and from the contemplation his mind sought refuge in the Supreme Tribunal. "I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." And though, in the agitated state of his spirit, the recollection did not long abide, the fact is true and the consolation lasting.

The Lord has a bottle, and into that bottle He puts His people's tears, and the tears of all who are oppressed. When Joseph wept at Dothan, and the Jews at Babylon, it was not the sand of the desert nor the stream of Euphrates which intercepted the tear; but God's bottle. When the poor man works hard, and, coming for his wages, gets only rough words or coarse ridicule; when, from the hap-

less negro his wife and children are torn by some vindictive master, and sold into a distant State; when, in her new mourning, the bewildered mother goes to claim the scanty provision for her babes, and finds that a cunning quirk has left her not only a widow, but a pauper,—man may mock the misery, but God regards the crime. And whether it be the scalding tear of the Southern slave, or that which freezes in the Siberian exile's eye, God's bottle has received them all; and when the measure is full, the tears of the oppressed burst in vials of vengeance on the head of the oppressor.

So true is this, that, whenever it foretells retribution, poetry becomes prophetic:—

> "Ye horrid towers, the abode of broken hearts;
> Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,
> That monarchs have supplied from age to age
> With music, such as suits their ears,—
> The sighs and groans of miserable men!
> There's not an English heart that would not leap
> To hear that ye were fallen."

So sang the bard of Olney in the hey-day of the Bourbons; and a few years later the heart of England did leap, for the Bastile was fallen. And two centuries have passed since, like a Hebrew seer, our Milton prayed:—

> "Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
> Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;"

and there is not a succeeding age which has not seen an instalment of the vengeance: and our own is witnessing that fulfilment which "the triple tyrant" most abhors,—the resurrection of their ashes in Roman Protestants and Italian friends of freedom.

This is a great principle, and not to be lost sight of—the weakness of oppression, the terrible strength of the oppressed. I do not allude to the elasticity of the human heart, though that is very great, and is apt, sooner or later, to heave off despotisms and every sort of incubus. I do not so much allude to that—for elastic though it is, it sometimes has been crushed. But I allude to that all-inspecting and all-adjusting Power which controls the affairs of men. And though Solomon felt so perturbed by the prosperous cruelty he witnessed; though he "beheld the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; for on the side of their oppressors there was power;"—had he bent his eye a little longer in the direction where it eventually rested, he would have found a Comforter for the oppressed, and would have seen the impotence of the oppressor. For "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked" (iii. 17); or, as the close of the book more amply declares it, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And with two worlds in which to outwork the retribution, and with a whole eternity to overtake the arrears of time, oh! how tyrants should fear for God's judgments; and that match which themselves have kindled, and which is slowly creeping round to explode their own subjacent mine, in what floods of repentance, if wise, would they drench it! Had they been wise enough to remember that "on the side of the oppressed" there is always infinite "Power," Pharaoh would have dreaded the Hebrew infants more than the Hebrew soldiery, and Herod would have been more

frightened for the babes of Bethlehem than for the legions of Rome. To David the most dreadful of foes would have been the murdered Uriah, and to Ahab the hosts of Syria, compared with the corpse of Naboth, need have given no uneasiness. More than all the might of Britain had Napoleon cause to dread the blood of Enghien, and, beyond all foreign enemies, should modern nations tremble for their slaves: FOR ON THE SIDE OF THE OPPRESSED IS OMNIPOTENCE, AND THE MOST DEATHLESS OF FOES IS A VICTIM!

My friends, the Gospel is the law of liberty. Such an antagonist is it to all that is unfair and arbitrary and oppressive, that it is only where there is a reign of darkness that there can be a reign of despotism. Even as it is, every Christian is a freeman. His loyalty to God is liberty. It is freedom from tyrannical lusts and task-master passions. It is the bond of iniquity broken. It is emancipation from the thraldom of Satan. And if there were two countries, one of which the Son of God had made free,[1] and the other of which had freed itself; in one of which Christians were ruled by an absolute but God-fearing Dictator, and in the other of which the slaves of Satan ruled themselves—we know very well where we should find the greater freedom. But still, the tendency of the Gospel is to do away the pride and imperiousness and unfairness which are here called "oppression;" and if there were any land where these two truths were practically realized, "God is Light," and "God is Love"—that land would be a land of liberty.

[1] John viii. 32, 36.

Still, liberty, or exemption from man's oppression, is a priceless blessing. And it may be worth while to ask, What can Christians do for its culture and diffusion ?

And, first of all, yourselves be free. Seek freedom from fierce passions and dark prejudices. If you are led captive by the devil at his will, you are sure to become an oppressor. In the greed of gain you will be apt to defraud the hireling of his wages ; and that is oppression. In the fury of affronted pride, you will be apt to wreak disproportionate wrath on the offender ; and that also is oppression. In the narrowness of sectarianism you will be ready to punish men for their convictions ; and such persecution is oppression. He who governs his family by fear, is an oppressor. He who tries to accomplish by force what can be effected by reason, is an oppressor. And if he would only look, such a man might see the tears of those whom he oppresses. He might see the tears of the broken-hearted suppliant who, with case unheard and with a rude rebuff, has been driven from his door. He might see the tears of the conscientious labourer who has been deprived of bread and bereft of a maintenance for his family by refusing to work on Sunday. He might see the tears of his dependant who, for attendance on some interdicted place of worship, or for adherence to a sect proscribed, has received his warning. And though a tear be a little mirror, did he but behold it for one calm moment, it might reveal the oppressor to himself, and save a multitude of sorrows.

Beware of confounding liberty with license. One of the greatest blessings in a State, or in a Christian Church,

is good government; but from mistaken notions of independence, it is the delight of some to "speak evil of dignities." They carp and cavil at every law, and they set at defiance every regulation of the powers that be, and one would almost fancy that in their esteem rulers were ordained as a target for public rancour, or a safety-valve for national spleen. On the other hand, an enlightened Christian and patriot will always remember that a constitutional Government—a Government where himself and the rulers have given mutual guarantees—is too great a mercy to be lightly imperilled: and he will also remember that where obedience is order, anarchy is pretty sure to end in oppression. It was a noble sentiment, not only for a soldier but for a subject, "I like to be at my post, doing my duty; indifferent whether one set or another govern, provided they govern well."[1] And, like the hero who originally uttered it, the man who is thus magnanimous in obeying is likely to be mighty in command.

And, finally, cultivate a humane and gentle spirit. Every master, every parent, every public functionary, must, from time to time, pronounce decisions or give commands which cross some one's wishes or derange some one's plans. But it will go far to propitiate compliance when it is seen that it is not in recklessness, but for good reason, or, perhaps, from a regretted necessity, that the unwelcome order is given: or where there is tenderness, there never can be tyranny. On the other hand, wherever there is thoughtlessness, there will be tyranny; and wherever there is a hard or cruel nature, it only needs

[1] *Life of General Sir John Moore*, vol. ii. p. 14.

that power be added in order to bring to light another Nero.

Here it is that the mollifying religion of Jesus comes in as the great promoter of freedom and the great opponent of oppression. By infusing a benevolent spirit into the bosom of the Christian, it makes him the natural guardian of weakness and the natural friend of innocence. And whether it be the savage sportsman who gloats over the tears and dying shudders of the harmless forest-ranger, or who, shooting the parent-bird on her way to her eyrie, leaves the callow nestlings to pine away with slow hunger; —or the kidnapper who carries off the struggling boy from his mother's arms, or stows away in separate ships bound for far-sundered shores, the young chieftain and his bride; —or the Moslem conqueror who hews his way from land to land through fields of quivering slain;—or the

> "Cowl'd demons of the inquisitorial cell,
> The worse than common fiends from heaven that fell,
> The baser, ranker sprung, Autochthones of hell:"[1]

—whichever be the form of oppression which nightmares our sympathies, or the form of cruelty which lacerates our feelings, we foresee an end of it in the final triumph of the Cross. We foresee an end of it when the Saviour asserts His rightful supremacy, and subdues all things under Him. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God;" and till then, in every groan of the creature we must recognise a pledge and a prayer that the Son of God will be manifest once more, and that the disciples of Jesus will yet be numerous

[1] Coleridge.

enough to secure a reign of peace and justice in this sin-cursed world. And as we listen to these inarticulate groans of the burdened creation, we, who are nature's interpreters and the world's intercessors, must translate them into the petition, "Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

October 6, 1850.

X.

THE SANCTUARY.

READ ECCLES. v. 1-7.

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God."

VANITY of vanities: human occupation, human existence, is all fantastic and foolish. Verily, each man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain. Like the fly-plague in Egypt, every scene of mortal life is infested by frivolity and falsehood; and it is hard to tell which is the sorest vexation—the buzz and bewilderment of vanities still living, or the noisesomeness of those that are dead. The cottage and the palace, the student's chamber and the prince's banquet-room, all teem with them, and there is no secure retreat from those vanities which on the wing are a weariness, and in the cup of enjoyment are the poison of pleasure. "Nay, we have not tried that temple—we have not yet gone to the house of God. There, perhaps, we shall find a tranquil asylum. There, if anywhere, we should find a heaven on earth—a refuge from the insincerity and unsatisfactoriness which elsewhere abound." Ah, no: the temple itself is full of vacant worship. It resounds with rash vows and babbling voices.

It is the house of God, but man has made it a nest of triflers, a fair of vanity, a den of thieves. Some come to it as reckless and irreverent as if they were stepping into a neighbour's house. Some come to it and feel as if they laid the Most High under obligation because they bring a sheaf of corn or a pair of pigeons; whilst they never listen to the lessons of God's Word, nor strive after that obedience which is better than sacrifice. Some come and rattle over empty forms of devotion, as if they would be heard because of their much speaking. And some come, and in a fit of fervour utter vows which they forget to pay; and when reminded of their promise by the "angel" of the church—the priest or his messenger—they protest that there must be some mistake; they repudiate the vow, and say "it was an error."

A thoughtless resorting to the sanctuary; inattention and indevotion there: and precipitancy in religious vows and promises, are still as common as in the days of Solomon. And for these evils the only remedy is that which he prescribes,—a heartfelt and abiding reverence. "Fear thou God;" "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth;" "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God."

1. There is a preparation for the sanctuary. Not only should there be prayer beforehand for God's blessing there, but a studious effort to concentrate on its services all our faculties. In the spirit of that significant Oriental usage which drops its sandals at the palace door, the devout worshipper will put off his travel-tarnished shoes,—will try to divest himself of secular anxieties and worldly pro-

jects,—when the place where he stands is converted into holy ground by the words, "Let us worship God."

Be "ready to *hear*." We freely grant that dull hearing is often produced by dull speaking. We allow that there is a great contrast when the sameness of sermons is set over against the variety and vivacity of Scripture. And so often is the text injured by its treatment, that we have many a time wished that some power could give it back in its original pungency, and divested of its drowsy associations. That passage of the Word was a burning lamp, till the obscuring interpretation conveyed it under a bushel. It was a fire, till a non-conducting intellect encased it, and made it like a furnace in felt. It was the finest of the wheat, till a husky understanding buried it in chaff. It was "a dropping from the honeycomb," till tedious insipidity diffused it and drowned it in its deluge of commonplace. And we allow that much of the impatience and inattention of hearers may be owing to the prolixity of preachers. But still, admitting that on the one side there is often the fault of commonplace as well as "the sin of excessive length,"[1] and conceding to every hearer the same right to exert his tasteful and intellectual faculties when listening to a sermon as when perusing a printed book; you will not deny that on the other side there are often a languor and lukewarmness, of which the cure must be sought, not so much in the greater power of the preacher, as in the growing piety of the hearer. There are two sorts of instruction to which if we do not hearken we are utterly without excuse. One is the direct instruc-

[1] Bishop Shirley.

tion of God's Word; the other is truth and earnestness embodied in a Christian teacher. But how often are the lively oracles read in public worship, and a relief experienced when the lesson is ended! and how often does some fervent evangelist pour forth appeals full of that rarest originality,—the pathos of a yearning spirit,—and find no response save stolid apathy, or a patronizing compliment to his energy!

Half the power of preaching lies in the mutual preparation. The minister must not serve God with that which cost him nothing; but it is not the minister alone who should "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." There is a reciprocal duty on the part of the hearer. He should come with a purpose, and he should come with prayer. He should come hopeful of benefit, and bestirring all his faculties, that he may miss nothing which is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." He should come with a benevolent prepossession towards his pastor, and with a friendly solicitude for his fellow-hearers. And thus, as iron sharpens iron, so his intelligent countenance would animate the speaker; and, like a Hur or an Aaron, his silent petitions would contribute to the success of the sermon.

Nor can aught be more fatal than a habit of indolent hearing. Like one who glances into a mirror, and sees disorder in his attire, or dust on his face, and says, "I must attend to this," but forthwith forgets it, and hurries out on his journey; or who, in the time of plague, sees the livid marks on his countenance, and says, "I must

take advice for this," and thinks no more about it till he drops death-stricken on the pavement: so there are languid or luxurious listeners to the Word of God. At the moment they say, Very true, or, Very good, and they resolve to take some action: but just as the mirror is not medicine,—as even the glassy pool does not remove from the countenance the specks which it reveals, if merely looked into, so a self-survey in the clearest sermon will neither erase the blemishes from your character, nor expel the sin-plague from your soul. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear. And, laying apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein,"—like a man who seeing his be-dusted visage in the mirror of that polished flood, loses not a moment, but makes a laver of his looking-glass,—"he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed:"[1] he shall be saved by his promptitude; or, if saved already, he shall become a more beautiful character by his strenuous self-application.

2. In devotional exercises be intent and deliberate (verses 2, 3). Like a dream which is a medley from the

[1] James i. 19-25.

waking day,—which into its own warp of delirium weaves a shred from all the day's engagements, so, could a fool's prayer be exactly reproduced, it would be a tissue of trifles intermingled with vain repetitions. In all the multitude of words it might be found that there was not a single sincere confession, not one heart-felt and heaven-arresting supplication.

For such vain repetitions the remedy still is reverence. "Be not rash," but remember at whose throne you are kneeling; and be not verbose, but let your words be few and emphatic, as of one who is favoured with an audience from Heaven's King. It is right to have stated seasons of worship; but it were also well if with our acts of devotion we could combine some special errand; and it might go far to give precision and urgency to our morning or evening prayer, if for a few moments beforehand we considered whether there were any sin to confess, any duty or difficulty demanding special grace, any friend or any object for which we ought to intercede. And when the emergencies of life—some perplexity or sorrow, some deliverance or mercy,—at an unwonted season sends us to the Lord, without any lengthened preamble we should give to this originating occasion the fulness of our feelings and the foremost place in our petitions.

3. In like manner, be not rash with vows and religious promises (verses 4-7). In the old Levitical economy there was large provision made for spontaneous vows and votive offerings; and in our own Christian time there are occasions for vows virtual or implied. It is a vow or a solemn

promise which a pastor makes when he assumes an office in the Christian Church; and it is a virtual vow which every disciple makes when he becomes a member of that Church: equivalent to the oath of fidelity which a citizen takes when he becomes a soldier, or a servant of the Crown. And occasionally, for the carrying out of some great enterprise, it may be expedient that like-minded men should join together and covenant to stand by one another till the reform or the philanthropic object is effected. But if Christians make voluntary vows at all, it should be with clear warrant from the Word, for purposes obviously attainable, and for limited periods of time. The man who vows to offer a certain prayer at a given hour for all his remaining life, may find it perfectly convenient for the next six months, but not for the next six years. The man who vows to pious uses half the income of the year may be safe; whereas, the Jephthah who rashly devotes contingencies over which he has no control may pierce himself through with many sorrows. And whilst every believer feels it his reasonable service to present himself to God a living sacrifice, those who wish to walk in the liberty of sonship will seek to make their dedication, as a child is devoted to his parents, not so much in the stringent precision of a legal document, as in the daily forthgoings of a filial mind.

The glory of Gospel worship consists in its freedom, its simplicity, and its spirituality. We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; and we are encouraged to draw near with a true heart in full assur-

ance of faith. We are not come to a burning mount, nor to the sound of a trumpet and a voice of terror; but we are come "to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The Father seeks true worshippers, such as will worship Him in spirit and in truth: and now that sacrifice and offering have ceased,—now that burdensome observances have vanished away, praise and prayer and almsgiving are the ordinary oblations of the Christian Church. But surely the freedom of our worship should not abate from its fervour; and because it is simple, there is the more scope for sincerity, and the more need that it should be the worship of the heart and soul. But do we sufficiently realize our privileged but solemn position as worshippers of Him, to whom Seraphim continually do cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory?" Do we sufficiently realize our blessedness as fellow-worshippers with those who sing on high, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain?" In the house of prayer, do we make worship our study, and devotion our business? Do we "labour mightily in prayer," and do we "wake up our glory to sing and give praise?" Or are not many of us content to be lookers-on at the prayers, and listeners to the psalmody? and instead of "a golden vial full of odours," is not many a devotional act a vain oblation, a vapid form; a tedium to ourselves, and an offence to the Most High?

Beloved, let us bestir ourselves in worship. Let us "make a joyful noise unto the Lord;" let us "serve him

with gladness." Let us sing His praises "with grave sweet melody," and "with grace in our hearts." And let us concentrate our thoughts, and join zealously in the confessions, the thanksgivings, and the supplications of the public prayers. And thus, like the restful activity of the temple above, we shall find moments pass swiftly which may now be a weariness; and refreshed by the sacred exertion which enlisted our faculties, and which enlivened our feelings, we shall retire sweetly conscious that it was "good to be there."

Finally, my friends, amidst the assurance and gladness of Gospel worship, let us take care that we lose nothing of our veneration and godly fear. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." "Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face." It is a poor religion in which reverence is not a conspicuous element; and, like Moses in the mount, if a man has really communed with God, there will be something awful in the shining of his face. And just as in a far inferior matter,—our relations to one another,—just as you never respect the man who does not respect the noble spirits and exalted intellects among his fellows; whilst you always feel that wherever there is admiration of the great and good there is the germ of principle, the possibility of eminent excellence:—so, be it the homely peasant or the village patriarch; be it the philosopher[1] always pausing

[1] Boyle.

before he uttered the Name Supreme, or Israel's destined lawgiver putting his shoes from off his feet on Horeb's holy ground—you always feel that to realize Heaven's majesty is itself majestic, and that there is nothing in itself more venerable than habitual veneration.

November 10, 1850.

XI.

THE EXCHANGE.

READ ECCLES. v. 9–20; VI. 1–9.

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver."

THIS passage describes the vanity of riches. With the enjoyments of frugal industry it contrasts the woes of wealth. Looking up from that condition on which Solomon looked down, it may help to reconcile us to our lot, if we remember how the most opulent of princes envied a lowly station.

1. In all grades of society human subsistence is very much the same. "The profit of the earth is for all; the king himself is served by the field." "What had the wise more than the fool?" Even princes are not fed with ambrosia, nor do poets subsist on asphodel. Bread and water, the produce of the flocks and the herds, and a few homely vegetables, form the staple of his food who can lay the globe under tribute; and these essentials of healthful existence are within the attainment of ordinary industry. "The profit of the earth is for all."

2. When a man begins to amass money, he begins to feed an appetite which nothing can appease, and which its proper food will only render fiercer. "He that loveth

silver shall not be satisfied with silver. To greed there may be "increase," but no increase can ever be "abundance." For, could you change all the pebbles on the beach into minted money, or conjure into bank-notes all the leaves of the forest; nay, could you transmute the solid earth into a single lump of gold, and drop it into the gaping mouth of Mammon, it would only be a crumb of transient comfort, a restorative enabling him to cry a little louder, Give, give. Therefore, happy they who have never got enough to awaken the accumulating passion, and who, feeling that food and raiment are the utmost to which they can aspire, are therewith content.

3. It is another consideration which should reconcile us to the want of wealth: that, as abundance grows, so grow the consumers, and of riches less perishable, the proprietor enjoys no more than the mere spectator. "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?" It is so far well that rank involves a retinue, and that no man can be so selfishly sumptuous but that his luxury gives employment and subsistence to others. On the other hand, it is also well that riches cannot retain in exclusive monopoly the pleasures they procure. A rich man buys a picture or a statue, and he is proud to think that his mansion is adorned with such a famous masterpiece. But a poor man comes and looks at it, and, because he has the æsthetic insight, in a few minutes he is conscious of more astonishment and pleasure than the dull proprietor has experienced in half a century. Or, a rich man lays out a

park or a garden, and, except the diversion of planning and remodelling, he has derived from it little enjoyment; but some bright morning a holiday student or a town-pent tourist comes, and when he leaves he carries with him a freight of life-long recollections. The porter at the gates should have orders to intercept such appropriating sight-seers; for though they leave the canvas on the walls, and the marblé in the gallery—though they leave the flowers in the vases, and the trees in the forest, they have carried off the glory and the gladness; their bibulous eyes have drunk a delectation, and all their senses have absorbed a joy for which the owner vainly pays his heavy yearly ransom.

4. Amongst the pleasures of obscurity, or rather of occupation, the next noticed is sound slumber. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." Sometimes the wealthy would be the better for a taste of poverty; it would reveal to them their privileges. But if the poor could get a taste of opulence it would reveal to them strange luxuries in lowliness. Fevered with late hours and false excitement, or scared by visions, the righteous recompense of gluttonous excess, or with breath suppressed and palpitating heart listing the fancied footsteps of the robber, grandeur often pays a nightly penance for the triumph of the day. As a king expresses it, who could sympathize with Solomon:—

> "How many thousands of my poorest subjects
> Are at this hour asleep!—Sleep, gentle sleep!
> Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,

That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
And steep my senses in forgetfulness!
Why rather, Sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
And hush'd with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
Under the canopies of costly state,
And lull'd with sounds of sweetest melody?
Then, happy, lowly clown!
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."[1]

5. Wealth is often the ruin of its possessor. It is "kept for the owner to his hurt." Like that King of Cyprus who made himself so rich that he became a tempting spoil, and who, rather than lose his treasures, embarked them in perforated ships; but, wanting courage to draw the plugs, ventured back to land and lost both his money and his life![2] so a fortune is a great perplexity to its owner, and is no defence in times of danger. And very often, by enabling him to procure all that heart can wish, it pierces him through with many sorrows. Ministering to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, misdirected opulence has ruined many both in soul and body.

6. Nor is it a small vexation to have accumulated a fortune, and, when expecting to transmit it to some favourite child, to find it suddenly swept away. (Vers. 14-16.) There is now the son, but where is the sumptuous mansion? Here is the heir, but where is the vaunted heritage?

7. Last of all come the infirmity and fretfulness which

[1] *Henry IV.*, Second Part.

[2] Procul dubio hic non possedit divitias, sed a divitiis possessus est; titulo rex insulæ, animo pecuniæ miserabile mancipium.—*Valerius Maximus*, lib. ix. cap. 4.

are the frequent companions of wealth. "All his days also he eats in darkness, and suffers anxiety and peevishness along with sickness." You pass a stately mansion, and as the powdered menials are closing the shutters of the brilliant room, and you see the sumptuous table spread and the fire-light flashing on vessels of gold and vessels of silver, perhaps no pang of envy pricks your bosom, but a glow of gratulation for a moment fills it: Happy people who tread carpets so soft, and who swim through halls so splendid! But, some future day, when the candles are lighted and the curtains drawn in that selfsame apartment, it is your lot to be within; and as the invalid owner is wheeled to his place at the table, and as dainties are handed round of which he dares not taste, and as the guests interchange cold courtesy, and all is stiff magnificence and conventional inanity—your fancy cannot help flying off to some humbler spot with which you are more familiar, and "where quiet with contentment makes her home." Nay, how curious the contrast could the thoughts be read which sometimes cross one another! That ragged urchin who opened the common-gate, and let the silvery chariot through—oh, "what a phantom of delight" the lady looked as in clouds of cushions and on a firmament of ultramarine she floated away! What a golden house she must have come from, and what a happy thing to be borne about from place to place in such a carriage, as easy as a bird and as brilliant as a queen! But, little boy, that lady looked at you. As she passed she noticed your ruddy cheeks, and she envied you. That glittering chariot was carrying what you do not know—a broken

heart; and, death-stricken and world-weary, as she looked at you she thought, How pleasant to have lived amongst the blossomed May-trees on this common's edge, and never known the falsehoods of fashion and the evil ways of the world!

We have glanced at the sorrows of the rich; some will expect that we should now descant on the sinfulness of riches. And a certain class of religionists, misunderstanding the Saviour's precept, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," have spoken of money as if it were a malignant principle, and have canonized poverty as a Christian grace. Fully carried out, this theory would prohibit the flagon of oil and the barrel of meal, and would reduce us all to the widow's cruse and handful; for it makes little difference whether the hoard be in kind, or packed up in the portable form of money. It would justify the life of the anchoret, who has no funded property except the roots in the ground and the nuts on the trees; and it would suit very well such a state of society as Israel spent in the desert, when no skill could secure a week's manna beforehand, and when the same pair of shoes lasted forty years. But as it was not for a world of anchorets or ascetics—as it was not for a society on which the clouds should rain miraculous supplies that the Saviour was legislating—His words must have another meaning. And what is that? Live by faith. Look forward: look upward. Let nothing temporal be your treasure. Whether your abode be a hut or a castle, think only of the Father's house as your enduring mansion. Whether your friends be high

or low, coarse or refined, think only of just men made perfect as your permanent associates. And whether your possessions be great or small, think only of the joys at God's right hand as your eternal treasure. Lead a life disentangled and expedite—setting your affections on things above, and never so clinging to the things temporal as to lose the things eternal.

Translated into its equivalent, money just means food and clothing, and a salubrious dwelling. It means instructive books, and rational recreation. It means freedom from anxiety, and leisure for personal improvement. It means the education of one's children, and the power of doing good to others. And to inveigh against it, as if it were intrinsically sinful, is as fanatical as it would be to inveigh against the bread and the raiment, the books and the Bibles, which the money procures. It would be to stultify all those precepts which tell us to provide things honest in the sight of all men; to do good and to communicate; to help forward destitute saints after a godly sort; to make friends of the unrighteous mammon.

And as there is nothing in the Bible to prohibit the acquirement of wealth, there is much to guide us in its right bestowment. Using but not abusing God's bounties, the Christian avoids both the wasteful and the penurious extremes, and is neither a miser nor a spendthrift. With that most elastic and enlightened disciple, who knew so well how to be abased and how to abound, the believer can say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. Everywhere and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to

abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

It was a sultry day, and an avaricious old man, who had hoarded a large amount, was toiling away and wasting his little remaining strength, when a heavenly apparition stood before him. "I am Solomon," it said, with a friendly voice; "what are you doing?" "If you are Solomon," answered the old man, "how can you ask? When I was young you sent me to the ant, and told me to consider her ways; and from her I learned to be industrious and gather stores." "You have only half learned your lesson," replied the spirit; "go once more to the ant, and learn to rest the winter of your years and enjoy your collected treasures."[1] And this lesson of moderate but cheerful spending, nothing teaches so effectually as the Gospel. Reminding the believer that the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, it also suggests to him that meat and raiment are more than money; and by saving him from the idolatry of wealth, it emboldens him to use it: so that far from feeling impoverished when it is converted into some worthy equivalent, he can use with thankfulness the gifts which his Heavenly Father sends him. Within the bounds of temperance and forethought, he subscribes to the sentiment of our text, "It is good and comely to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of one's labour; for the power to eat thereof and to take his portion is itself the gift of God."

But Christianity teaches a lesson higher still. "Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is

[1] Lessing's Fables.

more blessed to give than to receive," the true disciple will value wealth chiefly as he can spend it on objects dear to his dear Lord. To him money is a talent and a trust; and he will feel it a fine thing to have a fortune, because it enables him to do something notable for some noble end. And whether, like Granville Sharp, he spends it in pleading the cause of the oppressed and the friendless; or, like Howard, devotes it to reclaim the most depraved and degraded; or, like Simeon, purchases advowsons in order to appoint faithful pastors; or, like Thomas Wilson, multiplies places of worship in a crowded metropolis; there is no fortune which brings to its possessor such a return of solid satisfaction as that which is converted into Christian philanthropy. Our houses tumble down; our monuments decay; our equipages grow frail and shabby. But it is a fine thing to have a fortune, and so be able to give a grand impulse to some important cause. It is a happy thing to have wealth enough to set fairly afloat an emancipation movement or a prison reform. It is a noble thing to be rich enough to provide Gospel ordinances for ten thousand people in a vast and world-wielding capital. It is a blessed thing to be "a man to whom God has not only given riches and wealth," but so large a heart—so beneficent, so brotherly, that his fruition of his fortune is as wide as the thousands who share it, and the reversion as secure as the heaven in which it is treasured.

December 1, 1850.

XII.

BORROWED LIGHTS FOR A DARK LANDING.

"That which hath been is named already, and it is known what man is: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?"—ECCLES. VI. 10-12.

YOU have ascended a staircase which, inside the solid rock, wound up from the sands of the sea-shore to green fields and beautiful gardens. Somewhat of this sort is the structure of Ecclesiastes. And now we have reached the half-way landing-place, the dimmest and coldest station in the entire ascent; and very mournful is the strain in which our moralist reviews his progress. "Fate is fixed, and man is feeble; joy is but a phantom, and life a vapour, and darkness veils the future." Truly, we have need to borrow lamps and suspend them in this dark place. We must send for some brighter minstrel; for our hearts will break if we only listen to the bard of vanity.

I. Fate is fixed. "That which hath been or which is to be, hath been named already; neither may man contend with him that is mightier than he." All the past was the result of a previous destiny, and so shall be all

the future. Everything is fate. Such is the sentiment of the third chapter, and such appears to be the import of this passage. "Since fate bears sway, and everything must be as it is, why dost thou strive against it?"[1]

Brethren, is there never such a feeling in your minds? Do you never feel as if you were the subjects of a stern ordination? Do you never say, "I must obey my destiny. It is of no use contending with fate. Mine is an unlucky star, and I can change neither my nature nor my nativity; so I must bide my time and take my doom?" Do you never feel as if you were driven along a path over which you have no control, and as if the power propelling you were a blind and inexorable necessity?

Partly imbibed from the old classics, and partly from a sound theology sullenly spoken; and partly indigenous to the human heart, which even when it does not believe in God and in Jesus, cannot believe in chance, the feeling now expressed is far from rare; and just as it seems to have visited Solomon in the thoughtful interludes of his vanity, so the more pensive and musing spirits are likely to feel it most. As it contains a certain admixture of truth, on a principle which we have frequently adopted in these Lectures, we shall go to a greater than Solomon in order to get that partial truth corrected and completed.

In the outset, it must be conceded that the Saviour assumed a pre-ordination in all events. He was constantly using such language as this: "The hour is come;" "The hairs of your head are all numbered;" "Your names are written in heaven;" "Many be called, but few

[1] *Marcus Antoninus*, xii. 13.

chosen;" "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him;" "For the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, God hath shortened the days;" "To my sheep I give eternal life." But then, what sort of pre-ordination was it which the Saviour recognised? Was it mechanical, or moral? Was it blind destiny, or a wise decree? Was it the evolution of a dark necessity, or "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God?" Was it the fiat of an abstract law, or the will of a living Person? In one word, was it FATE, or was it PROVIDENCE?

Most comforting is it to study this doctrine with the great Prophet for our tutor, and so to see the propitious aspect which it bears when rightly understood. As interpreted by "the only-begotten Son from the bosom of the Father," that pre-arrangement of events which the theologian calls Predestination, and which the philosopher calls Necessity, and which old heathenism called Fate, is nothing more than the will of the Father,—the good pleasure of that blessed and only Potentate whose omniscience foresaw all possibilities, and from out of all these possibilities whose benevolent wisdom selected the best and gave it being. And he alone can understand election, or exult in Providence, who in right of the Surety can look up to God as his Father, and so take the same views of the Father's purposes as the Saviour took, equally revering the majestic fixity of the firm decree, equally rejoicing in its wise foresight and paternal kindness. "Fear not, little flock, it is *your Father's* GOOD PLEASURE to give you the kingdom." "I thank thee, *O Father*, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid

these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed *good in thy sight.*" "*The hour is come,* that the Son of man should be glorified. *Father,* glorify thy name." And just as you might imagine some poor wandered child waking up amidst the din and tumult of a factory, and cowering half-delinquent, half-stupefied, into his dusky corner,—afraid lest this thunderous enginery rush in on him and rend him to pieces, and still more paralysed when he perceives in its movements the indications of an awful order,—the whole spinning and whirling, clashing and clanking, in obedience to a mysterious and invisible power. But whilst he is watching from his hiding-place, another child comes in, of an age about his own; and this other walks fearlessly forward, for his father leads him by the hand, and shows him the beautiful fabrics which are flowing forth from all the noisy mechanism; or if there be some point in their progress where there is risk to his child from the flashing wheels, he speaks a word and that portion stands still; for his father is owner of it all. So to the poor waif of mortality, outcast child of apostate Adam,—to the godless spirit waking up in this world of rapid revolution and tumultuous resonance, there is an awful aspect of fatality on the one side, and a crushing sense of impotence on the other. So selfish is man, and so cruel is the world; so strange are life's reverses, and so irresistible is the progress of events, that he momentarily expects to be annihilated by the strong and remorseless mechanism; —when, in the midst of all the turmoil he perceives one

of like passions with himself walking calmly up and down, and fearing no evil, for his Father is with him, and that Father is contriver and controller of the whole. So, my friends, it depends on our point of view whether the fixed succession of events shall appear as a sublime arrangement or a dire necessity. It depends on whether we recognise ourselves as foundlings in the universe, or the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ,—it depends on this, whether in the mighty maze we discern the decrees of fate, or the presiding wisdom of our Heavenly Father. It depends on whether we are still skulking in the obscure corner, aliens, intruders, outlaws; or walking at liberty, with filial spirit and filial security,—whether we shall be more panic-stricken by the power of the mechanism, or more enchanted with its beautiful products. It depends on whether we are spectators or sons, whether our emotion towards the Divine foreknowledge and sovereignty be, "O fate, I fear thee," or, "O Father, I thank Thee."

II. Man is feeble. "It is known what man is: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he." And Christless humanity is a very feeble thing. His bodily frame is feeble. A punctured nerve or a particle of sand will sometimes occasion it exquisite anguish; a grape-seed or an insect's sting has been known to consign it to dissolution. And man's intellect is feeble; or, rather, it is a strange mixture of strength and weakness:—

> "Go, wondrous creature! mount where science guides;
> Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;
> Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
> Correct old Time, and regulate the sun;

> Go, soar with Plato to the empyreal sphere,
> To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
> Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—
> Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!"[1]

Nevertheless, redeemed and regenerate humanity is only a little lower than the angels. Its materialism was worn by the Son of God Incarnate, and as He wore it, it was found a shrine in which perfect goodness could exist, and one from which not a few of its endearing rays could emanate; and, celestialized, that corporeity will find a place in the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwelleth. And, sublimed and sanctified, man's intellect is fit for the noblest themes in the loftiest society. Not to speak of Moses' meek sagacity, and David's lyric raptures, and Solomon's startling intuitions: there are sons of Adam who, here, on earth, possessed no knowledge beyond simple apprehension or idiot ignorance, and who are now the immediate pupils of the Bright and Morning Star, and fellow-students with the seraphim. And though it be madness in man to contend with his Maker, it is man's prerogative that his very weakness is a purchase on Omnipotence. Insane when contending with One that is mightier, he is irresistible when in faith and coincidence of holy affection he fights the battles of the Most High, and when by prayer and uplooking affiance, he imports into his own imbecility the might of Jehovah. It is known what man is, and what mere man can do. A Samson can rend the ravening lion, and return to find his bleached ribs a hive of honey. A Goliath can hold at bay the embattled host, and with his beam-like lance beat back a

[1] Pope's *Essay on Man*, Ep. ii.

charging company. David's three champions can hew their way through the host of the Philistines, and from the well of Bethlehem bear triumphant to the camp their costly flask of water. And thus, the potsherds of the earth can strive with the potsherds of the earth, and a strong one destroy the weaker. But it is hardly known yet what man can do when his Maker contends for him and fights through him; although the temptations which Joseph and Daniel have vanquished, and found their demolished strength replaced by sweetness; the terror of God which a solitary Elijah or John Baptist has stricken into an idolatrous or hypocritical generation; the water of life which Paul and Silas and Timothy have carried into the midst of a dying world through pain and peril, through bitter mocking and daily deaths,—although these moral triumphs and religious trophies are earnests and examples of what may be done by man when, through Christ strengthening, man is rendered superhuman.

III. Every joy is futile. Enjoyment is only fresh food for the life-wasting vanity; more fat kine for the lean ones to devour and convert into tenuity; additional must, poured into the working vat in order to acidify and augment the brewage of vexation. "Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?" What the better is man of that reputation which only makes him more envied? What the better is he of that wealth which only makes him more obnoxious to plots and dangers? What the better of that philosophy which, like a taper on the face of a midnight cliff, only shows how beetling is the brow above him, and how profound

the gulf below, whilst he himself is crawling a wingless reptile on the ever-narrowing ledge? What the better is acquirement, when, after all, man's intellect, man's conscience, man's affections must remain a vast and unappeasable vacuity?

Here it is that the other Royal Preacher comes forward, and, instead of echoing, answers the demand of Solomon. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Jesus is God manifest, and, therefore, Jesus known is satisfaction to the famished intellect. He is God reconciled, and, therefore, Jesus trusted is comfort to the aching conscience. He is God communicated, and, therefore, Jesus loved is a continual feast to the hungry affections. Incarnate, atoning, interceding, Immanuel is the bread of life,—the only sustenance and satisfaction of the immortal soul. And, O my hearers, if any of you are hungry, make trial of this food. If your conscience hungers, feed on some faithful saying till you find it as sweet as it is solid, as refreshing as 'tis true. "God loved the world and gave his Son." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "His blood cleanseth from all sin." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "Behold the Lamb of God!" Dwell on such sayings till they have sunk into your spirit's core, and spread through your consenting nature in realizations glad and blissful. Does your understanding hunger? Do you pine for some knowledge absolute, conclusive, positive? Then no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him. Look to Jesus.

Study the Word made flesh. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In Him, the express image of the Father, behold at once your Teacher and your task; for Jesus is the true Theology. Sit at the Saviour's feet, and listen to His words; for God is all which Jesus says. Look into His countenance; for God is all which Jesus is. And do your affections hunger? From the festivals of earth—from its feast of friendship even, do you sometimes retire mortified and almost misanthropic? or, like the reveller glancing up at the thread-suspended sword, or gazing at the fulgorous finger as it flames along the wall, have you misgivings in the unhallowed mercies which you enjoy aloof from God, or in the place of God, or beneath the wrath of God? Then, through the Mediator be reconciled to God. In Christ accept Him as your Friend and Father. Enter into His peace, and learn to delight in His perfections; and thus, while sinful pleasures lose their relish, lawful joys will acquire a flavour of sacredness, and the zest of a sweet security. Or should the cistern break and the creature fail, the infinite joy is Jehovah, and the soul cannot wither whose roots are replenished from that fountain unfailing.

IV. Life is fleeting. It is a "vain life," and all its days a "shadow." A shadow is the nearest thing to a nullity. It is seldom noticed. Even "a vapour" in the firmament—a cloud may catch the eye, and in watching its changing hues or figure you may find the amusement of a moment; and if that cloud condense into a shower, a few fields may thank it for its timely refreshment. But a shadow—the shadow of a vapour! who notes it? who

records it? As it sails along the mountain side, with morning bright behind it and summer noon before it, the daisy does not care to wink, nor does the hare-bell droop, nor does the bee suspend its labours; and at eve, the shepherd-boy cross-questioned cannot tell if any cloud there were. And the case is rare where some panting traveller sighs, "Return, O shadow! Kind vapour, I wish you would not vanish!"

But Jesus Christ hath brought immortality to light. This fleeting life He has rendered important as "a shadow from the rock eternity." "I am the Resurrection and the Life: whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." In His own teaching, and in the teaching of His apostles, the present existence acquires a fearful consequence as the germ, or rather as the outset of one which is never-ending. To their view, this existence is both everything and nothing. As the commencement of eternity, and as giving its complexion to all the changeless future, it is everything; as the competitor of that eternity or the counterpoise to its joys and sorrows, it is nothing. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" "Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." "How vain, then,

are men, who, seeing life so short, endeavour to live long and not to live well!"[1] How vain are men who, pronouncing the present life a shadow, neglect to secure the everlasting substance!

V. The future is a dark enigma. "Who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?"

Says Dr. Stewart of Moulin, "I remember an old, pious, very recluse minister, whom I used to meet once a year. He scarcely ever looked at a newspaper. When others were talking about the French Revolution, he showed no concern or curiosity about it. He said he knew from the Bible how it would all end, better than the most sagacious politician—that the Lord reigns—that the earth shall be filled with His glory—that the Gospel shall be preached to all nations—and that all subordinate events are working out these great ends. This was enough for him, and he gave himself no concern about the news or events of the day, only saying, It shall be well with the righteous."[2] And although no man can tell the conqueror how it shall be with the dynasty he has founded, nor the poet how it shall be with the epic he has published, nor the capitalist how it shall be with the fortune he has accumulated, it is easy to tell the philanthropist and the Christian how it shall be, not only with himself, but with the cause he is so eagerly promoting. And without quenching curiosity, it may quiet all anxiety to know that when he himself is gone to be for ever with the Lord, Christ's kingdom shall be spreading in the world. "Then

[1] Jeremy Taylor's *Works*, vol. iii. p. 418.
[2] *Memoirs of Dr. Stewart*, p. 336.

said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed. Go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

December 8, 1850.

XIII.

PRECIOUS PERFUME.

"A good name is better than precious ointment."—Eccles. vii. 1.

At this point we come out into a purer atmosphere; we emerge upon a higher platform; and, if we have not day-spring, we have the harbingers of dawn.

Hitherto the book has chiefly contained the diagnosis of the great disease. Repeating the successive symptoms as they developed in himself, the royal patient has passed before us in every variety of mood, from the sleepy collapse of one who has eaten the fabled lotus, up to the frantic consciousness of a Hercules tearing his limbs as he tries to rend off his robe of fiery poison. He now comes to the cure. He enumerates the prescriptions which he tried, and mentions their results. Most of them afforded some relief. They made him "better." But they were only palliatives. There was something which always impaired their efficacy; and it is only at the very end that he announces the great panacea, and gives us what is better than a thousand palliatives—an unfailing specific.

The recipes contained in this and the subsequent

chapters availed to mitigate Solomon's vexation, but they failed to cure it. They mitigated it, because each of them was one ingredient of the great specific; they failed to cure it, because they were only isolated ingredients. Each maxim of virtue is conducive to happy living; but the love of God is the vitality of all virtue; and, in order to secure its full practical value, we must supply to each separate maxim the great animating motive. A rule of conduct which is "dead, so long as it abideth alone," may be very helpful when quickened, and when occupying its appropriate place in a system of evangelical ethics.

Solomon's first beatitude is an honourable reputation. He knew what it had been to possess it; and he knew what it was to lose it. And here he says, Happy is the possessor of an untarnished character! so happy that he cannot die too soon! "A good name is better than precious ointment; and (to its owner) the day of death is better than the day of birth."

A name truly good is the aroma from virtuous character. It is a spontaneous emanation from genuine excellence. It is a reputation for whatsoever things are honest, lovely, and of good report. It is such a name as is not only remembered on earth, but written in heaven. The names of Abel and Enoch and Noah are good names, and so are all which have been transmitted in that "little book of martyrs," the eleventh of Hebrews: those "elders" who not only obtained the Church's good report, through faith, but who had this testimony, "that they pleased God." But in order to a good name

something else is needed besides a good nature. Flowers have bloomed in the desert which were only viewed by God and the angels; and there have been solitary saints whose holiness was only recognised by Him who created it, and by just men made perfect. And so wicked is this world that much excellence may have vanished from its surface unknown and unsuspected. The Inquisition has, no doubt, extinguished many an Antipas, and in the Sodoms of our earth many a Lot has vexed his soul, and died with no Pentateuch to preserve his memory. To secure a reputation there must not only be the genuine excellence, but the genial atmosphere. There must be some good men to observe and appreciate the goodness while it lived, and others to foster its memory when gone. But should both combine,—the worth and the appreciation of worth,—the resulting good name is better than precious ointment. Rarer and more costly, it is also one of the most salutary influences that can penetrate society. For, just as a box of spikenard is not only valuable to its possessor, but pre-eminently precious in its diffusion; so, when a name is really good, it is of unspeakable service to all who are capable of feeling its exquisite inspiration. And should the Spirit of God so replenish a man with His gifts and graces, as to render his name thus wholesome, better than the day of his birth will be the day of his death; for at death the box is broken, and the sweet savour spreads abroad. There is an end of the envy and sectarianism and jealousy, the detraction and the calumny, which often environ goodness when living; and now that the stopper of prejudice is removed, the world fills with

the odour of the ointment, and thousands grow stronger and more lifesome for the good name of one. Better in this respect, better than their birth-day was the dying-day of Henry Martyn and Robert M'Cheyne; for the secret of their hidden life was then revealed, and, mingled as it is with the name of Jesus, the Church will never lose the perfume. And in this respect better than their birth-day was the dying-day of Dr. Arnold and Sir Fowell Buxton; for men could then forget the offence of controversy and the irritation of party politics, and could surrender to the undiluted charm of healthy piety and heroic Christianity. And better, thus regarded, was the dying-day of Stephen and James and Paul; for every disciple could then forget the infirmities by which some had been annoyed, and the faithfulness by which others had been offended, and could treasure up that best of a good man's relics, the memory of a devoted life,—the sweet odour of an unquestioned sanctity.

Do not despise a good name. There is no better heritage that a father can bequeath to his children, and there are few influences on society more wholesome than the fame of its worthies. The names of Luther and Knox, of Hampden and Washington, of Schwartz and Eliot, are still doing good in the world. Nor is there in a family any richer heirloom than the memory of a noble ancestor. Without a good name you can possess little ascendency over others; and if it has not pioneered your way and won a prepossession for yourself, your patriotic or benevolent intentions are almost sure to be defeated.

And yet it will never do to seek a good name as a

primary object. Like trying to be graceful, the effort to be popular will make you contemptible. Take care of your spirit and conduct, and your reputation will take care of itself. It is by "blamelessness and good behaviour," that not only bishops, but individual believers, are to gain "a good report of them who are without." The utmost that you are called to do as the custodier of your own reputation, is to remove injurious aspersions. Let not your good be evil spoken of, and follow the highest examples in mild and explicit self-vindication. Still, no reputation can be permanent which does not spring from principle; and he who would maintain a good character should be mainly solicitous to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.

Where others are concerned the case is different. To our high-principled and deserving brethren, we owe a frank commendation and a fraternal testimony. "To rejoice in their good name; to cover their infirmities; freely to acknowledge their gifts and graces; readily to receive a good report, and unwillingly to admit an evil report concerning them; to discourage tale-bearers and slanderers,"[1] are duties which we owe to our neighbours; and good names are not so numerous but that the utmost care should be taken of them. When Dr. M'Crie published the Life of our Reformer, it was very noble in Dugald Stewart to seek out the young author in his humble dwelling, and cheer him with his earnest eulogy. And when a deed of atrocious cruelty was ascribed to one of the Reformation heroes, it was fine to see their advocate

[1] Westminster Larger Catechism.

rummaging amongst the archives of the Public Library, till the discrepant date enabled him to exclaim, "Thank God! our friend was by that time safe in Abraham's bosom!" It was a happy thing for Paul to have so good a name among the Gentile Churches, that his mere request was enough to bring large contributions to the poor saints at Jerusalem; but if so, what a happy thought to Barnabas to know that when Paul himself was an object of suspicion to the Church at Jerusalem,[1] his own good name had been the new convert's passport.

[1] Acts ix. 26, 27.

December 15, 1850.

XIV.

DEAD FLIES.

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."—ECCLES. X. 1.

THE people of Palestine dealt largely in aromatic oils, and it was a chief business of their apothecaries to prepare them. A little thing was enough to spoil them. Although the vase were alabaster, and although the most exquisite perfumes were dissolved in the limpid olive, a dead fly could change the whole into a pestilent odour.

And so, says the Royal Moralist, a character may be carefully confected. You may attend to all the rules of wisdom and self-government which I have now laid down; but if you retain a single infirmity it will ruin the whole. Like the decomposing influence of that dead fly, it will injure all the rest and destroy the reputation which you otherwise merit.

The principle is especially applicable to a Christian profession; and the best use we can make of it is to exemplify it in some of those flaws and failings which destroy the attraction and impressiveness of men truly devout and God-fearing. Our instances must be taken

almost at random: for, like their Egyptian prototypes, these flies are too many to be counted.

Rudeness.—Some good men are blunt in their feelings, and rough in their manners; and they apologize for their coarseness by calling it honesty, downrightness, plainness of speech. They quote in self-defence the sharp words and shaggy mien of Elijah and John the Baptist, and, as affectation, they sneer at the soft address and mild manners of gentler men. Now, it is very true that there is a certain strength of character, an impetuousness of feeling, and a sturdy vehemence of principle, to which it is more difficult to prescribe the rules of Christian courtesy, than to more meek and pliant natures. It is very possible that Latimer in his bluntness, and Knox in his erect and iron severity, and Luther in the magnificent explosions of his far-resounding indignation, may have been nobler natures, and fuller of the grace of God than the supple courtiers whose sensibilities they so rudely shattered. But it does not follow that men who have not got their warfare to wage are entitled to use their weapons. Nor does it even follow that their warfare would have been less successful had they wielded no such weapons. The question, however, is not between two rival graces,—between integrity on the one side and affability on the other; but the question is, Are these two graces compatible? Can they coexist? Is it possible for a man to be explicit, and open, and honest, and, withal, courteous and considerate of the feelings of others? Is it possible to add to fervour and fidelity, suavity and urbanity and brotherly kindness? The question has already been answered, for the actual

union of these things has already been exhibited. Without referring to Nathan's interview with David, where truth and tenderness triumph together, or Paul's remonstrances to his brethren, in which a melting heart is the vehicle of each needful reproof, we need only refer to the great example itself. In the epistles to the Asiatic Churches, each begins with commendation, wherever there was anything that could be commended. With the magnanimity which remembers past services in the midst of present injury, and which would rather notice good than complain of evil, each message, so far as there was material for it, is ushered in by a word of eulogy, and weight is added to the subsequent admonition by this preface of kindness.[1] And it was the same while the Lord Jesus was on earth. His tender tone was the keen edge of His reproofs, and His unquestionable love infused solemnity into every warning. There never was one more faithful than the Son of God, but there never was one more considerate. And just as rudeness is not essential to honesty, so neither is roughness to strength of character. The Christian should have a strong character; he should be a man of remarkable decision; he should start back from temptation as from a bursting bomb. And he should be a man of inflexible purpose. When once he knows his Lord's will, he should go through with it, ay, through fire and water with it. But this he may do without renouncing the meekness and gentleness which were in Christ. He may have zeal without pugnacity, determination without obstinacy. He should distinguish between

[1] Fuller on the Apocalypse, p. 16.

the ferocity of the animal and the courage of the Christian. And whether he makes the distinction or not, the world will make it. The world looks for the serene benevolence of conscious strength in a follower of the Lamb of God; and, however rude its own conduct, it expects that the Christian himself will be courteous.

Irritability.—One of the most obvious and impressive features in the Saviour's character was His meekness. In a patience which ingenious or sudden provocation could not upset; in a magnanimity which insult could not ruffle; in a gentleness from which no folly could extract an unadvised word, men saw what they could scarcely understand, but that which made them marvel. Though disciples were strangely dull, He never lost temper with them; though Judas was very dishonest, He did not bring any railing accusation against him; though Philip had been so long time with Him, and had not understood Him, He did not dismiss him from His company. When Peter denied Him, it was not a frown that withered him, but a glance of affection that melted him. And so with His enemies; it was not by lightning from heaven, but by love from His pierced heart, that He subdued them. But many Christians lack this beauty of their Master's holiness; they are afflicted with evil tempers, they cannot rule their spirits, or rather they do not try. Some indulge occasional fits of anger; and others are haunted by habitual, daily, life-long fretfulness. The one sort is generally calm and pellucid as an Alpine lake, but on some special provocation, is tossed up into a magnificent tempest; the other is like the Bosporus, in a continual stir, and even

when not a breath is moving, by the contrariety of its internal currents vexing itself into a ceaseless whirl and eddy. The one is Hecla—for long intervals silent as a granite peak, and suffering the snow-flakes to fall on its cold crater, till you forget that it is a burning mountain; and then on some sudden and unlooked-for disturbance, hurling the hollow truce into the clouds, and pouring forth in one noisy night the stifled mischief of many a year. The other is Stromboli, a perpetual volcano, seldom indulging in any disastrous eruption; but muttering and quaking, steaming and hissing night and day, in a way which makes strangers nervous; and ever and anon spinning through the air a red-hot rock, or a spirt of molten metal, to remind the heedless natives of their angry neighbour. But either form, the paroxysmal fury, or the perennial fretfulness, is inconsistent with the wisdom from above, which is peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated. Worldly men can perceive the inconsistency, but instead of ascribing it to its proper causes, they are more likely to attribute it to the insincerity of Christians, or the insufficiency of the Gospel; and even the more willing sort of worldlings, those who have some predisposition in favour of the truth, are very apt to be shocked and driven off by the unhallowed ebullitions of religious men. Suppose such an individual, with his attention newly awakened to the great salvation—with his mind impressed by some scriptural delineation of regenerate character; his ear, it may be, still charmed with a glowing description of the Gospel's magic power, making wolfish men so lamb-like, and teaching the weaned child to play on the cockatrice den: sup-

pose such a man in the way of business, or kindness. or spiritual inquiry, to approach a stranger of Christian renown, and accosting him in full persuasion of his Christian character, prepared for a cordial welcome, a patient hearing at the least,—but, alas! coming in at some unpropitious moment, he is greeted with a shout of impatience, or annihilated by a flash from his lowering countenance—why, it is like putting your hand into the nest of the turtle-dove, and drawing it out with a long slimy serpent, dangling in warty folds, and holding on by its fiery fangs. There is horror in the disappointment, as well as anguish in the bite; and the frightful association cannot easily be forgotten.

Akin to these infirmities of temper, are some other inconsistencies as inconvenient to their Christian brethren as they are likely to stumble a scoffing world. Some professors are so whimsical and impracticable, that it needs continual stratagem to enlist them in any labour of usefulness, and after they are once fairly engaged in it, nothing but perpetual watchfulness and the most tender management can keep them in it. In all your dealings with them, like a man walking over a galvanic pavement, you tread uneasily, wondering when the next shock is to come off, and every moment expecting some paradox to spring under your feet. In the Christian societies of which they are members, they constitute non-conformable materials of which it is difficult to dispose. They are irregular solids for which it is not easy to find a place in rearing the temple. They are the polyhedrons of the Church, each punctilio of their own forming a several face, and

making it a hard problem to fix them where they will not mar the structure. Apostolical magnanimity they deem subserviency or sinful connivance; and simultaneous movements or Christian co-operation they deem lawful only when all conform to themselves. Like an individual armed with a non-conductor, and who can stop an electric circuit after it has travelled through a mile of other men, sectarian professors are so positively charged with their own peculiarities, that the influence which has been transmitted through consenting myriads, stops short as soon as it reaches them.

Selfishness.—The world expects self-denial in the Christian; and with reason, for of all men he can best afford it, and by his profession he is committed to it. You are on a journey, and because you have been distributing tracts or reading the Bible, or have made some pious observations, your fellow-travellers set you down for a Christian. By and by one of your companions makes a civil remark, but not being in a mood for talking, you turn him off with a short answer. A delicate passenger would like your side of the carriage, but you wish to see the country or prefer the cooler side; so you make no movement, but allow your neighbour to change places with the invalid. And at last an accident occurs which will detain you an hour beyond the usual time; so you lose all patience, and fret, and scold, and talk of hiring post-chaises,—while some good-humoured or philosophic wayfarer sits quiet in the corner, or gets out, and looks leisurely on till the misfortune is mended, and then resumes his journey, having lost nothing but his time, whilst you

have lost both your time and your temper. In such a case it would be better that you had left the tracts and the Bible at home, for your inconsistency is likely to do more evil than your direct efforts are likely to do good. As a worldly man, you would have been entitled to indulge your own indolence, your own convenience, or your own impatience as much as you please: but if you really are a disciple of Christ, you owed it to Him to "deny yourself."

The subject is uninviting, and time would fail did we speak of the parsimony, the indolence, the egotism, the want of intelligence, the want of taste, by which many excellent characters are marred, and by which the glory of the Gospel is often compromised. We would not be accusers of the brethren. We would rather suggest a subject for self-examination, and we indicate an object to which the Church's energy might be advantageously directed. We fear that we have failed to cultivate sufficiently the things honest, lovely, and of good report, and that we have sometimes allowed ourselves to be excelled by worldly men in those beauties of character which, although subordinate, are not insignificant. Attention to the wants of others, care for their welfare, and consideration for their feelings, are scriptural graces for which all Christians ought to be conspicuous. Christianity allows us to forget our own wants, but it does not permit us to forget the necessities of our brethren. It requires us to be careless of our own ease, but it forbids us to overlook the comfort and convenience of other people. Of this the Lord Jesus was Himself the pattern. He was sometimes an-hungered, but in that case He

wrought no miracle. But when the multitude had long fasted, He created bread to supply them, rather than send them away fainting. And though His great errand was to save His people from their sins, none ever saved so many from their sorrows. And in this disciples should resemble Him. Although they know that the soul is better worth than the body, and the interests of eternity more precious than those of time, they also know that it is after these things that the Gentiles seek; and, therefore, if they would win the Gentiles, they must attend to their personal wants and temporal comforts. Nay, more, as a system of universal amelioration, Christianity demands our efforts for the outward weal of our worldly neighbours, and our delicate attention to the minutest comfort of our Christian brethren. It was on this principle that, seeking the salvation of his peasant-parishioners; Oberlin felt that he was not going out of his way as an evangelist, when he opened a school for children, wild as their own rock-goats; when he taught the older people many humble but useful arts hitherto unknown in the Ban-de-la-Roche; when he set them to the planting of trees and clearing of roads; when he established an agricultural society, and published a calendar, divested of the astrological falsehoods with which their almanacs were wont to abound. Oberlin's Christianity would have prompted these humane and beneficent actions, even though no ulterior good had accrued from them; but first in the love of these villagers, and then in their conversion to God, he had his abundant reward. And it was on the same principle that the apostolic Williams, brimful

of sense and kindness, startling his South Sea Islanders with the prodigies of civilisation, and enriching them with its inventions, at once conveyed an idea of the bountiful spirit of the Gospel, and conciliated their affection to its messenger. And it was on the same principle that the benignant Wilberforce—himself the best "practical view of Christianity"—was so studious of the feelings, and so accommodating to the wishes of his worldly friends,—so abounded in those considerate attentions to the humblest acquaintance, which only a delicate mind could imagine, and a dexterous skill could execute,—and would subject himself to all sorts of inconvenience in order to "carry a ray of gladness from the social circle into the sick man's cottage," or to temper with his own diffusive gladness the bitter cup of some humble believer. No disciple can resemble his Lord, who does not maintain this benignant bearing to all around him. Grace was infused into the lips of Jesus. None in the guise of humanity was ever conscious of such power within; none ever gave outlet to inherent power in milder coruscations. His gentleness made him great; and so engaging was His aspect, so compassionate His mien, that frail mortality could lay its head securely on His bosom, though a Shekinah slept within. Believers should in this resemble Jesus. They should be mild and accessible, and like the Sun of Righteousness, they should carry such healing in their wings, as to make their very presence the harbinger of joy. It was said of Charles of Bala, that it was a good sermon to look at him. And so much of the Master's mind should reside in each disciple as to make

that true of him which the old elegy says of one of England's finest worthies :—

"A sweet attractive kind of grace,
A full assurance given by looks,
Continual comfort in a face
The lineament of Gospel-books;
For sure that count'nance cannot lie,
Whose thoughts are written in the eye."

February 16, 1851.

XV.

BLUNT AXES: OR, SCIENCE AND GOOD SENSE.

READ ECCLES. IX. 13-18; X. 1-15.

"If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength; but wisdom is profitable to direct."

LORD BACON said, "Knowledge is power," and during the last hundred years no aphorism has been so often quoted, nor has any been so largely illustrated. In this little island, and during the present week, machinery will be in motion doing the work of five hundred millions of men; that is to say, the machines of England and Scotland will this week weave as much cloth and prepare as much food, and supply the world's inhabitants with as many commodities, as could be made by hand if all the up-grown natives of the globe were exerting all their industry. Could you convert into artificers and labourers every man and woman in either hemisphere, and from the Caffres at the Cape to the Peers in our Parliament, did all agree to toil their utmost, and had they no implements besides those which primitive man possessed,—with all the expenditure of their vital powers, with all the sweat, and waste of fibre, and straining of eyesight, at the week's

end it would be found that they had not done the same amount of work, nor done that work so well as a few engines peacefully revolving under the impulse of some hogsheads of water, or so many tons of coal.

In the barbaric civilisation of the old Mexicans, it was thought a wonderful exploit to transmit intelligence at the rate of 200 miles in four-and-twenty hours. As they had neither horses nor dromedaries, in order to accomplish this feat, posts were established at intervals of three or four miles; and snatching the despatch from one reeking messenger, the courier burst away with it and flew over hill and valley till he reached the next station, and thrust it into the hand of another express, who, in his turn, bolted off and conveyed it further inland, till at last it reached the Emperor. How amazed one of these old Aztecs might be could he revive from the slumber of three centuries, and see the whole accomplished without fatigue to a single human being! How amazed, did he know, that without shortening the breath or moistening the brow of a single messenger, communications could come and go betwixt a king and his commander-in-chief, a hundred leagues asunder, fifty times in a single day!

We see that "knowledge is power," and we constantly repeat the saying as if Bacon had been the first who remarked the strength of skill. But six-and-twenty centuries before the days of Lord Verulam, King Solomon had said, "A wise man is strong." "Wisdom is better than strength." "Wisdom is better than weapons of war." Perhaps it is owing to the imperfect sympathies which exist between theologians and philosophers, that such scriptural sayings,

and many others fraught with great principles, have received so little justice. And hence it has come to pass, that many a maxim has got a fresh circulation, and has made a little fortune of renown for its author, which is, after all, a medal fresh minted from Bible money: the gold of Moses or Solomon used up again, with the image and superscription of Bacon, or Pascal, or Benjamin Franklin.

The particular example which Solomon here gives, will bring to your remembrance many parallels, from the time when Archimedes with his engines on the wall sank the ships of Marcellus in the port of Syracuse, down to the gallant and successful defence of Antwerp conducted by the old mathematician, Carnot.[1] "There was a little city and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city." And surely science is never more sublime than when thus she wins and wears the civic crown. Or even should there be no invader at the gates, when a beneficent ingenuity is exerted to enhance the pleasures of peace; when discovery, chemical or dynamical, floods our streets with midnight radiance, and bids clear water spring up in the poorest attic; when it mitigates disease, or multiplies the loaves of bread; when, by making them nearer neighbours, it forces nations to be better friends, and by diminishing life's interruptions, lengthens our span of probation and our power of usefulness; surely the "poor man" whose "wisdom" thus enriches the species, deserves to sit among

[1] Livy, lib. xxiv. cap. 34. Alison's *Europe*, chap. lxxviii.

the princes of the people; and whilst religion should render praise to that Wonderful Counsellor who teacheth man such knowledge, patriotism and philanthropy must enrol the discoverers among the benefactors of mankind.

"Wisdom is better than strength," and the more that wisdom spreads, the more human strength is saved, and the more is comfort enhanced. The bird that is about to build her nest next month, will toil as long and work as hard as the sparrows and swallows that frequented the temple in the time of Solomon, and the building will be no improvement on the nests of three thousand years ago. But if Solomon's own palace were to be builded anew, modern skill could rear it much faster than Hiram's masonry; and there are few houses in London which do not contain luxuries and accommodations which were lacking in "the house of the forest of Lebanon." It is the kindness of the Creator to the inferior animal that He gives it instinct, and puts it from the outset on a plan sufficiently good for its purpose. But the prerogative of man is progress. His instincts are faint and few; whilst to reason and faith, the vistas are boundless. And betwixt that "wisdom" which God has directly revealed, and those expedients which are constantly occurring to painstaking intelligence, it is so arranged that the older humanity waxes, the lighter grow its toils and the more copious become the alleviations of its lot. Already a pound of coals and a pint of water will do the day's work of a sturdy man; and with a week's wages, a mechanic may now procure a library more comprehensive and more edifying than that which adorned the Tusculan villa,—

nay, such a store of books as the wealth of Solomon could not command.

These statements meet a certain misgiving of some truly Christian minds. They love the Bible because it is God's book. To some degree they love the landscape and the seasons, because they are God's handiwork. They can take pleasure in watching the proceedings of the lower animals, because in the dike-building of that beaver, or the nest-building of that bird, they can mark evolutions of the all-pervading Mind. But when they come to the operations of the artisan or the architect, they are conscious of an abrupt transition, and with the poet they exclaim,

> "God made the country, but man made the town."

Here, however, there is a fallacy. So far as sinful purposes may be designed or subserved in their construction, the town and its contents are the work of man; but the materials and the skill which moulds them are the good and perfect gifts of God. It is true that He has not taught man to make palaces and railways instinctively, as He has taught ants to build hillocks and construct covered galleries; but He has furnished the human mind with those faculties and tendencies which, under favouring circumstances, develop in railways and palaces, as surely as beaver-mind develops in moles and embankments, or as bee-mind develops in combs and hexagons And although it may be very true that the artificer is often undevout,—perhaps a libertine or an atheist; and although the curious contrivance or exquisite elaboration may be designed for any end but a holy one; when you

separate the moral from the mechanical,—the sin which is man's from the skill which is Jehovah's,—in every fair product, and more especially in every contribution to human comfort, you ought to recognise the wisdom and goodness of God as their ultimate origin, no less than if you read on every object, "Holiness to the Lord," and in each artificer discerned another Aholiab or Bezaleel. The arts are the gift of God; their abuse is from man and from the Devil. And just as an enlightened disciple looks forth on the landscape, and in its beautiful features as well as its curious ingredients, beholds mementoes of his Master: so, surveying a beautiful city, its museums and its monuments, its statues and fountains; or sauntering through a gallery of arts and useful inventions,—in all the symmetry of proportions and splendour of colouring, in every ingenious device and every powerful engine, he may discern the manifestations of that Mind which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working; and so far as skill and adaptation and elegance are involved, piety will hail the Great Architect himself as the maker of the town.[1]

So Christian is art,—so truly a good gift of the Father of lights, that, wherever the Gospel proceeds, this companion should go with it. When the missionary, Van der Kemp, was setting out for Africa, passing one of the brick-fields of London, he thought it would be such a boon to the Hottentots if he could improve their dwellings, that he offered himself as a servant to the brick-

[1] Those who are interested in such topics will find them fully discussed in *The Useful Arts; their Birth and Development*, edited by the Rev. S. Martin.

maker, and spent some weeks in learning the business. And he was right. It is not easy to live godly and righteously amidst filth and darkness; and although the Gospel will not refuse to enter a Hottentot hut or an Irish cabin, when once it is admitted its tendency is to improve that cabin or hut into a cottage with tiles on the floor and glass in the windows. And to the honour of Christian missionaries, it should be remembered that wherever they have gone they have carried those useful arts which render godliness profitable to all things. "In the schools of Sierra Leone, the girls are taught to spin and the boys to weave." In the South Sea Islands the missionaries have taught the people smith's work and wright's work; they have taught them to build ships and boil sugar; to print books and plant gardens. And even that race, once so besotted that its claim to the common humanity was disputed,—the Hottentots are now excellent farmers and artificers, and, in the words of one of themselves, "they can make everything except a watch and a coach."[1]

In concluding this part of the subject, we would only remark that the more things which a Christian is able to do the better. "If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength." A little skill expended in sharpening the edge, will save a great deal of strength in wielding the hatchet. But, just as the unskilful labourer who cannot handle the whetstone must

[1] Harris's *Great Commission*, pp. 196, 197. The industrial is admirably combined with the evangelistic in the French-Canadian Mission, and in the Home Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

belabour the tree with a blunt instrument, and after inflaming his palms and racking his sinews, achieves less result than his neighbour whose knowledge and whose knack avail instead of brute force: so the servant who does not know the right way to do his work, after all his fatigue and fluster, will give less satisfaction than one who has learned the best and easiest methods; the young emigrant who has no versatility must forego many comforts which more accomplished comrades enjoy; and the householder who knows nothing of the mechanic arts, or who knows not what to do when sickness and emergencies occur, must compensate by the depth of his purse, or by the strength of his arm, for the defects of his skill. A blunt axe implies heavy blows and an aching arm; coarse work with a blistered hand. But "wisdom is profitable to direct." Intelligence is as good as strength, and a little skill will save both time and materials, money and temper.

Important, however, as is mechanic skill, there is a wisdom still more profitable,—a wisdom which can turn to its own account the mechanic skill of others. The clever engineer who saved the little city was a poor man, and so little understanding had his fellow-citizens, that it was with difficulty he obtained a hearing for his project, and so little gratitude had they, that, when the danger was past, "no one remembered the poor man." And it is sad when people have neither the skill to help themselves, nor the sense to accept the services of others. It is sad when men have neither the sagacity to devise the measures which the emergency demands, nor can so far rule their

spirits as to keep "quiet" and listen to what "wise men" say. And next to him who can offer good counsel, is the wisdom of him who can take it.

"A wise man's heart is at his right hand," never off its guard.[1] He is calm and collected, and is not easily taken by surprise. Whereas, a fool's wits are at his left hand. His presence of mind is posthumous. He sees what he should have done when the mischief can no longer be undone. He hits on the very repartee he ought to have uttered when his assailant is already out of hearing. He suggests what would have saved the ship, when they are already raising the wreck. But, not only is it in ready resources that the fool is deficient; there is a transparent shallowness in his vacant gaze or self-conceited simper, and instead of that "sustained sense and gravity,"[1] which marks the man of mind, his garrulous egotism and confidential childishness are constantly betraying the secret of his silliness. Reserve is none of his failings. He is as frank as he is foolish; and when "he walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool."

One rare manifestation of good sense is magnanimity. "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences." If, acting as the king's adviser, you incur his displeasure; if, in obedience to conscience, or in concern for your country, you are constrained to urge unpalatable counsel, and if your faithfulness proves offensive, instead of retiring into some other land, be patriotic, and keep your

[1] G. Holden. [2] Dr. Chalmers.

post. Instead of obeying your offended dignity and returning spleen for spleen, await the propitious season. For a soft answer turneth away wrath, and self-control will conquer your sovereign. Nor is it only from the ministers of despots that such a sacrifice may be demanded. It extends to every official person. If you are a representative of the people, and if you are sometimes vexed and worried with unreasonable demands or ungracious remonstrances :—if you occupy some municipal station, and are brought into conflict with foul tongues and coarse natures : —if you are a member of any court, civil or ecclesiastical, where you are frequently out-voted, and measures are often carried which you utterly abhor,—the impulse is to abdicate. Why should you serve heads so thick, and hearts so thankless ? Why should you be mixed up with such a rabble, and submit day by day to have your good name kicked along the kennel ? And rather than be always making motions which are lost, and protests which are laughed at, would it not be better to retire into private life, and spend your influence on those who may both take your advice and spare your feelings ? True, if it were the love of praise or the love of power which put you in that post, now that popularity is waning and influence lost, by all means relinquish it. But if it were a higher motive, let the motive which took you keep you there. If it was the love of your country, or the zeal of the Gospel which drew you into office, let neither reproaches nor rough usage drive you out. Though the spirit of the populace rise up against you,—though the majority for the time overrule you, leave not your place. Calmness in the

midst of contumely, equanimity under defeat, will pacify great offences; and if you do not live to carry your point, when a subsequent age sees your principles triumph, you will be commemorated among the proto-martyrs, who, when the cause was forlorn, laboured, and never fainted.

Then, after a parenthetical reference to certain infatuations of princes, having already described the patience of wisdom, he next specifies its promptitude. "If the serpent bite before enchantment, what advantage has the charmer?" In the East, there have always been persons who, by means of music and legerdemain, exert great influence over some species of serpents; so that whilst under their spell, the deadly cobra may be handled as if he were utterly harmless. But if the charmer tread on the snake unawares, or be bitten when off his guard, he will be poisoned like another man. And to certain minds there has been given an ascendency over other minds, like the influence of the serpent-charmer. Sagacious and eloquent, they are able to soothe the fury of fierce tempers, and mould rancorous natures to their will. Like David's transforming harp, as the strain advances, it looks as if a new possession had entered the exorcised frame, and a seraph smiled out at those windows where a demon was frowning before. But alas for the harper, if Saul should snatch the javelin before David has time to touch the strings! Alas for the wise charmer, and also for the good cause, if the tyrant's passion towers up, or the decree of the despot goes forth before a friendly counsellor has time to interpose!

"The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious." It

is a pleasure to hear him, and so enriching is his discourse, that to listen is to be wiser and better. "But the lips of a fool will swallow up himself." He is the sepulchre of his own reputation; for as long as he was silent, you were willing to give him credit for the usual share of intelligence, but no sooner does he blurt out some astounding blunder—no sooner does he begin to prattle forth his egotism and vanity, than your respect is exchanged for contempt or compassion. Nay, it is not only himself that his lips swallow up: for all unlike the "gracious" discourse of the wise man, the gossip of the fool is heartless or malignant, and often ends in "mischievous madness." From recklessness, or from finding that a tale of slander will secure an audience even for a fool, he is constantly retailing calumny, and damaging other people's reputation. The rest of his talk is mere word-rubbish. "A man cannot tell what shall be;" and, "what shall be after him, who can tell?"—such trite and irksome truisms is he retailing all the day, to the sore vexation of some hapless hearer. He is consistent. He is no wiser in deed than in word: but even the road to the market—so patent and so frequented, he contrives to miss; and in the evening he and his ass return to the farm with their unsold produce, because he had forgotten "the way to the city," and would not follow his wiser companion.

It is very important that Christians should be men of high accomplishment. Crowded as is the world, it has still abundant room for first-rate men; and whosoever would insure a welcome from society, has only to unite

to good principle eminent skill in his own calling. But the day for stone hatchets and blunt axes is past, and from the humblest craft to the most intellectual profession, in order to succeed, it is requisite to be clever and active and well-informed. Doubtless, sickness and other calamities may interpose; but assuredly, no one has a right to quarrel with the world if it refuses to pay for misshapen garments and unreadable poems. Therefore we would say to our younger hearers, Make diligence in business a part of your religion. Add to virtue knowledge. Whatever you intend to do, pray, and study, and labour till no one can do that thing better than yourself; and then when you enter on active life, you will find that you are really wanted. And, much as you have heard of glutted markets and a redundant population, you will find that there is yet no surplus of tradesmen, or servants, or scholars, who with exalted piety combine professional excellence. Large as is the accumulation of people who through misconduct have broken down, or who through indolent mediocrity never can get on, you will find no glut of talented goodness, or of intelligence in union with principle. In short, you will find that there is room enough for all who are able and willing to serve their generation.

It is especially important that those who are trying to benefit others should possess the wisdom which is profitable to direct. Much good has been defeated by the want of skill or practical wisdom in Christian professors. Many children have grown up with gloomy notions of religion from the mismanagement of parents who so enforced its authority as to obscure its attractions. Many amiable

persons have been repelled from the Gospel by the long lectures of friends who were faithful enough to reprove them, but not wise enough to win them. Many a prejudice has been created by a single imprudence, which long-sustained exertions have failed to countervail. And many a noble enterprise, when almost safe in port, has at last been shipwrecked by well-meaning wilfulness, or through that infirmity of vision which, mistaking a street-lamp for a lighthouse, has steered by a denominational crotchet in the belief that it was a Christian principle.

Nor is the cultivation of sound sense unimportant with a view to personal piety.

> "That thou mayest injure no man, dove-like be,
> And serpent-like that none may injure thee."[1]

In a world like this, and not least in a capital like this, there is frequent need for such Christian sagacity; and, wherever he lives, a conscientious man must often encounter problems in conduct which tax not only all his principle but all his prudence. For such exigencies there is provided a great and precious promise: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." But, like all the gifts of God, this talent grows by trading; and he who prayerfully exerts his understanding in order to maintain the right-forward path of duty, will soon be fit to guide and counsel others. For, if "religion, placed in a soul of exquisite knowledge and abilities, as in a castle, finds not only habitation but defence,"[2] it is by

[1] Matt. x. 16, paraphrased by Cowper. [2] South.

devout self-culture, and by "behaving wisely" in his more personal affairs, that the judicious and high-minded Christian becomes at last a tower of strength to his friends, and a defence to the Gospel itself.

March 23, 1851.

XVI.

BREAD ON THE WATERS.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."—ECCLES. XI. 1.

WERE you going at the right season to Mysore or China, you would see thousands of people planting the corn of those countries. They sow it in the mud or on the dry soil, and then immediately they turn on a flood of water, so that the whole field becomes a shallow pond. You would think the seed was drowned. But wait a few weeks, and then go and view one of these artificial lakes, and from all its surface you will see green points rising, and day by day that grass shoots taller, till at last the water is no more seen, and till eventually the standing pool has ripened into a field of rich and rustling grain. So that in its literal sense the farmers of these lands are every year fulfilling the maxim of the text. For should the spring come on them, and find their supply of rice-corn scanty, instead of devouring it all, they will rather stint themselves. They will rather go hungry for weeks together, and live on a pinched supply: for the bread which they cast on the waters this spring, creates the

crop on which they are to subsist next autumn and winter; and they are content to cast it on the waters now, for they are sure to find it after many days.

Or suppose that you are in the South Sea Isles, where the bread-fruit grows,[1] and that by chance or on purpose, you scatter some of its precious bunches on the sea. At the moment you may feel that they are lost: but should the winds and waters waft them to one of those reef islands with which such seas are thickly studded, the wandering seeds may get washed ashore, and beneath those brilliant suns may quickly grow to a bread-fruit forest. And should some disaster long years after wreck you on that reef, when these trees are grown and their clusters ripe, you may owe your sustenance to the bread which you cast on the waters long ago.

Such is God's husbandry. Do the right deed. Do it in faith, and in prayer commend it to the care of God. And though the waves of circumstance may soon waft it beyond your ken, they only carry it to the place prepared by Him. And whether on an earthly or a heavenly shore, the result will be found, and the reaper will rejoice that he once was a sower.

Dr. Dwight of America tells how, when the country near Albany was newly settled, an Indian came to the inn at Litchfield, and asked for a night's shelter—at the same time confessing that from failure in hunting he had nothing to pay. The hostess drove him away with reproachful epithets, and as the Indian was retiring sorrowfully—there being no other inn for many a weary mile—

[1] The cultivated sort, however, has seldom any seeds.

a man who was sitting by directed the hostess to supply his wants and promised to pay her. As soon as his supper was ended, the Indian thanked his benefactor, and said he would some day repay him. Several years thereafter the settler was taken a prisoner by a hostile tribe, and carried off to Canada. However, his life was spared, though he himself was detained in slavery. But one day an Indian came to him, and giving him a musket, bade the white man follow him. The Indian never told where they were going, nor what was his object; but day after day the captive followed his mysterious guide, till one afternoon they came suddenly on a beautiful expanse of cultivated fields, with many houses rising amongst them. "Do you know that place?" asked the Indian. "Ah, yes—it is Litchfield;" and whilst the astonished exile had not recovered from his first start of amazement, the Indian exclaimed, "And I am the starving Indian on whom at this very place you took pity. And now that I have paid for my supper, I pray you go home."

And it is to such humanities that the text has primary reference; for the context runs, "Give a portion to seven and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." That is, miss no opportunity of performing kind actions. Though you should have bestowed your bounty on seven—on a number which you might deem sufficient—should an eighth present himself, do something for him also; for you know not what evil shall be upon earth. You know not in this world of mutation how soon you may be the pensioner instead of the almoner. You know not how soon you may be glad of a

crust from those who are at present thankful for your crumbs. Beneficence is the best insurance.

When Jonathan was young he was the heir-apparent of the throne; and in those days his favourite friend was a young Bethlehemite, whom they had brought to the palace to amuse the monarch with his minstrelsy. The young Bethlehemite was brave and high-hearted, and Jonathan loved him for his genius and his lofty piety, till he and the Prince Royal were fast and firm as any brothers. At length one morning Jonathan embraced a merry boy some five years old, and donning corslet and casque he followed his own sire to the battle. Next morning the corses of sire and son lay stiff on the heights of Gilboa, and the young minstrel was monarch of Israel. Years passed on, and the new sovereign found himself in Saul's old palace; and whichsoever way he looked there rose upon his spirit touching memories. Here was the very throne before which he had often kneeled, harp in hand, and watched the grim tyrant's features; and there was the wainscot in which his furious javelin had hung and quivered. And now he trode again the terraces where he and Jonathan had paced together, and sworn eternal friendship as they dreamed of a radiant future. He visited again the field in which they had set up their target and contended in friendly rivalry. He visited again the bower in which they took sweet counsel, and where they sang "The Lord is my Shepherd," and "Make a joyful noise," whilst yet these psalms were new. And everything brought back that pure and noble friend so tenderly, that the whole soul of the sovereign yearned for

some living relict on whom to lavish his regretful fondness. "And is there none?" No, none; except this feeble, limping youth, the little boy that was, and who dates his lameness from his father's funeral. Yes, but fetch him! Fetch Mephibosheth. He is all of Jonathan which now survives on earth; and for his dear father's sake, he shall possess again his patrimony, and, if he must not be the King, he shall never eat bread at meaner board than mine. And as he looked on the countenance so suggestive of one yet dearer; and as he rejoiced to see the poor youth reinstated in that home of which he was the natural heir; and as he eyed Mephibosheth filling in the banquet-hall the place which Jonathan had filled, whilst as yet himself was but a menial, David could sing with much significance, "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed." And David's own son, when he saw that sight—when he saw Jonathan's old kindness requited in this princely provision for his child—Solomon might say, as here he says, "Cast thy bread on the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days."

Although so often exemplified in cases of common humanity and kind-heartedness, the maxim of our text is especially applicable to the efforts of Christian philanthropy. These are pre-eminently amaranthine. There are seeds which, after being borne on the current for a few days or weeks, lose their vitality; they rot and sink and disappear. So is it with much of human effort. So is it with many a worldly scheme, many a plausible sug-

gestion, many a patriotic enterprise. It finds little favour in its day: it cannot get deposited in a sufficient number of appropriate minds; and thus, ere long, it becomes old and obsolete; the thought perishes, the seed dissolves and vanishes. But not so with pious effort. It is more than the lucky thought of fallible and short-sighted man; it is more than the well-meaning purpose of a feeble and sinful worm. It is a thought suggested by God's own Spirit; it is a purpose sustained and animated by One whose wisdom is infinite and who is alive for evermore. And though the mind in which that wish or effort first originated may long since have passed from these scenes of mortality;—though forgetful of its cunning, the hand which first launched on the tide of human thought that project or that principle, may long since be crumbling in the clay;—a heavenly life is at its core, and, as it journeys on its buoyant path, a covenant-keeping God will preserve its little ark till it reach the predestined creek, and after many days be drawn forth from the waters—a Moses of the mind.

So was it with the first Reformers. Searching in their Bibles they found truths of God which had vanished from the memories of men—great truths and glorious, no longer current in the vernacular of Christendom. But after their own understandings and hearts had been filled and expanded by them, they gave them utterance. That it is through the justified Surety that a sinner is just with God; that betwixt that sinner and that Surety nothing mediates nor intervenes, neither Mary in heaven nor mother Church on earth, neither the sainted mediator of

the Calendar nor the sacerdotal mediator of the Confessional; but that to his great High Priest, the God-Man, Immanuel, the sinner may come boldly and may come direct; that in order to receive the atonement and rejoice in Christ Jesus no preliminaries of penance, or pilgrimages, are requisite, but that for this great salvation conscious sin is sufficient fitness, and the Word and will of God sufficient warrant: these and other golden truths, fresh gleaned from the Bible, they published,—some preaching them from pulpits, some proclaiming with their pens. And the hosts of darkness took alarm. Wickliffe went to the dungeon: Huss and Jerome to the flaming pile. But, though the witnesses perished, the Word of God could not be bound: the truth of God was neither burned nor buried: but over the troubled deep of a dark and stormy century this bread of life, these seeds of saving knowledge, floated on, till God the Spirit landed them and planted them in minds prepared, and from these rescued waifs there sprang the glorious Reformation.

It were only to tell the same tale a little varied to rehearse how, once upon a time, every enterprise of Christian charity was once a project in some solitary and prayerful mind; and how, when cast forth on the waters of thought and opinion, it first halted and hovered, and looked as if it would never get to sea: and how, after touching at one point after another, and finding momentary favour only to be rebuffed again, some great gulf-current swept it clean away, and its author hoped to see it no more. And away it went; and it was bandied on the billows, and it was battered on the rocks, and it was

frozen in the iceberg, and it was roasted in the tropic, till at last the Eye that watched it and the Hand that steered it from above, conducted it to its sunny haven, and, safely landed on an honest soil, it burst and bourgeoned and waxed a mighty tree.

So understood, the principle admits of boundless application; and it should be very cheering to all who are engaged in labours of Christian love. For instance, if you are engaged in teaching your own children, or the children of other people, and your great anxiety is to see some good thing towards the Lord—some dawn of pious feeling, some development of personal earnestness; but notwithstanding all the endearment which you throw into your words, and all the prayer with which you follow up your instructions, you dare hardly say that you perceive any hopeful sign:—be not discouraged. It is God's own truth, and if all your heart be in it, it is living truth, and will blossom up some day. It may be, in that soul's salvation out and out. It may be, in restraining it from much sin, or in urging it to duties which it would otherwise have never thought of doing. And it may be after many days. It may be after your own day altogether. It may be on the shores of another continent. It may be on the shores of another world. But still, God's Word shall not go forth a living power, and come back a vacant nullity. That Word shall never go forth without returning, and when it returns it shall never be void. "In the morning, then, sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both shall be alike good." Sow thy seed. Sow tracts

and Bibles, and good books. Sow friendly hints and words in season. Sow cordial looks and substantial services. And sow beside all waters. Cast thy bread not only on Jordan's flood but on the streams of Babylon. Cast it on the Thames and the Ganges. And, whilst remembering that "the field is the world," forget not thine own family.

March 30, 1851.

XVII.

BRIGHT MOMENTS ON THE WING.

READ ECCLES. II. 24-26; III. 12, 13, 22; V. 18-20; VIII. 15; IX. 7-10.

"I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour: it is the gift of God."

EVERY moment brings its mercy; why should not mercies bring content? To the man who finds favour in His sight, God gives "wisdom and knowledge." He is conscious of his comforts, and he has sense to use them. But to the sinner God gives "travail." He has the toil of acquirement without the power of enjoyment. "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour."

Throughout the whole of the book language like this is constantly recurring. And, without pausing to enter a caveat against Epicurean perversions of the sentiment, we may at once proceed to its legitimate applications. Of all philosophies the most eclectic is evangelical Christianity; and many a sentiment which, isolated, would be an error, is not only innocent but useful, when acting as a tributary to this master principle.

Even in the days of his vanity, Solomon "saw" that there would be more happiness if there were less hankering. He saw it in mankind; he suspected it in himself. Like the November bee, with its forehead smeared in the honey of the hive, and which, smelling that deceitful lure, fancies that it is the nectar of far-off flowers, and which, still scenting somewhere ahead a land of honey, flies further and further afield, till the evening mist enshrouds it and congeals upon its wings, and it drops, benumbed and dying, on the frozen furrow: so Solomon had often seen his neighbours flying far into the winter in search of that honey which they had left at home; and he said, It would have been better that they had "eaten and drunken" from the produce of their previous toil; it would have been better if, instead of always labouring after more, they could have halted, and enjoyed "the good of their former labour."

And surely this principle is of extensive application. Without disparaging the pleasures of hope, or seeking to quell the zeal of progress, are the cases not numberless where, for all purposes of enjoyment, labour is lost, because coupled with the constant lust of further acquirement? or because of a strange oblivion of his own felicity on the part of the favoured possessor?

Behold us here in Britain, in the heart of the nineteenth century, surrounded with the broadest zone of peace and material comfort to be found in all the map of history. Looking at our temporal lot, we of this generation and this country stand on the very pinnacle of outward advantage; in all our lives never once affrighted by

the rumour of invasion; exempt from all the horrors of impressment and conscription; ignorant of martyrdoms religious and political;—free, self-governed, independent. Who knows it? Who remembers it? Who in these matters adverts to his own happiness? As she presses to her bosom her little boy, or parts on his open brow the darkening hair, amidst all her maternal pride, where is the mother who praises God for her young Briton's privilege? How many hearts remember to swell with the joyful recollection, Thank God, he may leave me if he pleases; but he can never be dragged from me against his will! He may become a More among lawyers, a Latimer among preachers, a Raleigh among statesmen, and need dread neither stake nor scaffold. He may become the victim of false accusation and malignant persecution; but he will not languish, without trial, slow years in the dungeon, nor by the rack be frenzied into a false witness against himself. He may turn out unwise, he may turn out unhappy; but, thank God, the son of British sire can never feel the tyrant's torture in his limb, nor the brand of slavery on his brow!

Behold that home of yours! What an Eden a thankful heart might make it! What a concentration of joys it will appear, as soon as the Spirit the Comforter has revealed its brightness, or as soon as its little groups and its daily scenes can only be viewed in the pictures of gold and ebony which furnish the mourner's memory! And yet, how often does your own peevishness embitter all its joy; and how often, with foolish hankering, do you quit its hoarded pleasures, and fly away to clubs and

crowded rooms, to theatres, or lonely travel, in search of the honey you have left at home!

Behold your position as a candidate for immortality! What could you desire which the God of grace has not done for you already? A salvation more complete—a Bible more plain—a revelation more abundant? And yet, instead of sitting down contentedly and thankfully to this "feast of fat things," and abandoning yourself to all the blessedness which is so freely given you, do you not usually find a barrier of dilatoriness or distrust rising up betwixt you and the costly provision? With that Gospel spreading blandly before you, there is nothing better for you than to eat and drink of its mercies, and enjoy the good which it brings you. Oh, study to realize your amazing position, as one whom Jehovah all-sufficient is daily inviting into His friendship, and whom the Wearer of a sinless humanity is willing to call His brother. Fear not to think it, that to you, poor tenant of the dust, a white robe and a golden harp are offered. Fear not to think it, all sin-laden and sin-pervaded as you are, that to the fellowship of angels and His own society, the Holy One invites you. Fear not to think it, that as a believer in Jesus, and so a member of His great ransomed body, you yourself are soon to be an inhabitant of that world where there is neither sin nor sorrow, and a burgess of that city whose streets are gold, and whose gates are pearl. Fear not to think such things; but fear to forget them. Fear not to believe such things; but fear to credit them in a cold and vacant manner. Fear to get into that habit which engulfs any amount of God's mercies as the

ocean engulfs the argosy, without feeling richer or fuller, or giving any revenue back.

One great source of our prevailing joylessness is our inadvertency. Living in Rome, a famous antiquarian and artist[1] tells us that he gave himself half an hour every day to meditate on his Italian happiness. There was wisdom in the rule. Thousands have lived in Rome, with the same pure sky smiling over them and the same articulate antiquity on every side accosting them, and never been aware of their felicity; just as there are thousands who growl and grumble through long years of English life, and never bless God for the greater mercy of being born in Britain. Few of us need to be better off—we all need to know how well off we are. We need to meditate on our human happiness. We might have been lost angels, of whose race no Redeemer took hold. We might have been cut off in our sins long ago, and now been in the place where God forgetteth to be gracious. We might have been born in dark or despotic lands, where faith is a miracle, and where piety is martyrdom. We might have laboured under those prejudices of education which make belief in the faithful saying as hard as it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Then, absolutely, there is for our meditation, daily, hourly, life-long, God's chief mercy—that largess of unprecedented love which is not the envied distinction of some far-off world, but is God's gift unspeakable to you, to me. Oh, let us for once dwell on our peerless prerogative, till we become a wonder to ourselves—till, but for our faith in

[1] Winkelman.

God, we should not be able to believe our own distinguished blessedness. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "He that hath the Son hath life." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name: who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

Another source of depression is distrustfulness. Am I wrong, my friends? Are not some of you in this predicament? You have no particular evil to record against the past, and yet you have great fears for the future. If you be a Christian, on the whole your life has been a happy one; and yet, with all that past happiness, you are afraid that you cannot be so happy hereafter. You are afraid that grief is coming—all the more afraid that grief is coming because so much joy is past. But this is wrong. This is perverse reasoning. If a child of God, your greatest happiness is coming yet. You are going up into a future where mightier than the mightiest trial—a grief-transforming, cloud-dispelling Friend awaits you. If God be your chiefest good, and conformity to God be your great desire, the future contains no real evil for you. In that future there may await you some painful in-

cidents. The loss of this and that other loved one may await you there—the loss of your substance—the loss of your health may await you, *and they may not;* "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But whatever else is in store for you, if you go piously and prayerfully forward into that future, you will find that many sweet mercies are there awaiting you, many blessings at this moment unsurmised and unsuspected—blessings, some of them, which the mourner only knows; and you will find that in that future God awaits you, as present, as powerful, and as kind as He has been in the most favoured past. So, summon up courage and go cheerfully forward. "Hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy." Whatever else you limit, set no limits to the loving-kindness of the Lord, nor to the largeness of those petitions by which the needy suppliant honours the liberal Giver. Many indulge a complaining spirit who scarcely reflect how wicked it is, and how provoking to the Most High. They take up the Bible, and they read the murmurings of Israel on the march to Canaan, and they pity poor Moses, and they do not wonder that, wearied with their petulance and peevishness, the Lord smote those rebels, so that all their carcases fell in the wilderness. And when they have read the narrative, they close the book; and the first member of the family that comes in their way, they have ready a long lecture of rough reprimanding and perverse fault-finding; or the first visitor that arrives, they inflict on him the story of their grievances; they tell how good and meritorious they have been, but how severely the Lord has frowned upon their wishes, and how cruelly

the Lord has baffled all their plans. Yes, brethren, we marvel at old Israel, because we are ignorant of ourselves. If, just as Canaan was the prize of meekness, and a single murmur was enough to forfeit it—if the Lord suspended any blessing on the same condition—if those only were to find next year prosperous who never grumbled this one, and those only were to get to heaven who never murmured by the way—which of us, who of all the two millions of London, would be the modern Joshua and Caleb? And yet, as it is, who would not try? Who is there that would not court the panegyric which God pronounced on the sons of Nun and Jephunneh? Who is there that would not wish the perpetual feast of a contented spirit, and the perpetual ornament of a praising one? Let us, brethren, combat our natural fault-finding, and our no less natural foreboding. Let us rejoice in the present, and let us trust for the future. Let us pray and strive till our frame of mind is more in unison with the Lord's kindness; and in the fulfilment of any wish, and the disappointment of any fear—in the kindness of any friend, and in the answer to any prayer—in every gracious providence, and in every spiritual mercy bestowed on ourselves or others dear to us—in all these let us recognise the merciful kindness of the Lord, and let us acknowledge what we recognise. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night: for thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands."

XVIII.

ALMOND BLOSSOMS.

READ ECCLES. XII. 1-7.

"Remember thy Creator, . . . while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

A DISSIPATED youth is sure to be followed by a cross and joyless old age. During the years of his ungodliness, Solomon had been a fast liver, and, most likely, he now felt creeping over him the jejune and dreary feelings which foretell a premature decline. No dew of youth survived to create a green old age, and having forestalled the reserve of strength and spirits, he had failed withal to lay up against this time a good foundation of faithful friends and pleasant memories. The portrait is general; but an old worldling seems to have supplied the original.

Of his last years this old man says, "I have no pleasure in them." Once on a time existence was a gladness, and the exuberant spirits overflowed in shouts and songs and hilarious ditties. So abundant was the joy of life, that, like the sunbeams in a tropic clime, it was needful to shade it, and with a Venetian lattice of imagined sorrows and tragic tales, the young man assuaged the over-fervid beams of his own felicity.

"In youth he loved the darksome lawn,
Brushed by the owlet's wing;
Then twilight was preferred to dawn,
And autumn to the spring.

Sad fancies did he then affect,
In luxury of disrespect
To his own prodigal excess
Of too familiar happiness."[1]

Now there is no need of such artificial abatements. It is not easy for the old man to get a nook so warm that it will thaw the winter in his veins. To say nothing of a song, it is not easy for him to muster up a smile; and as he listens with languid interest to the news of the day, and, in subtile sympathy with his own failing faculties, as he disparages this modern time and its dwindled men, it is plain that, as for the world, its avocations and amusements, its interests and its inhabitants, he has little pleasure in them.

It adds to the evil of such days that the pleasures of expectation are constantly lessening. Old age is a Tierra del Fuego,—a region where the weather never clears. Once, when a trivial ailment came, the hardy youth could outbrave it, and still go on with his daily duties. But now, every ailment is important, and they are never like to end. The cough is cured only to be succeeded by an asthma, and when the tender eyes have ceased to trickle, the ears begin to tingle. Once upon a time a few drops might fall into the brightest day, like a settling shower in June; and there were apt to be hurricanes, equinoctial gales, great calamities, drenching and devastating sorrows.

[1] Wordsworth.

But now, the day is all one drizzle, and life itself the chief calamity, and there is little space for hope where the weather is all either clouds or rain.

Then, in the third and three following verses, there is given an allegorical sketch of the infirmities of age. "The keepers of the house tremble." Those arms once so brawny wither. The Priam who could have cleft a brazen panoply, can now fling a spear with scarce an infant's force,—and the David who could hurl his pebble straight into the centre of Goliath's brow, can scarcely carry to his own lips a cup of water. In either arm the sturdy champion used to feel that he had two stout defenders,—two trusty keepers of the castle; but now that he is old, any one can bind them and carry him whither he would not. "And the strong men bow themselves." Those active limbs can do no more. The pedestrian tells how once on a time he walked his hundred miles in four-and-twenty hours, and then, as he gets up to give a specimen, he stumbles on the carpet. That other disciple who outran Peter can no longer creep from his couch to the sanctuary, but is fain to be carried in his chair. Be thankful, Asahel, that you die so soon, or none would believe that your feet were once swifter than a roe. Be thankful, Samson, that you perish in your prime, or it would not be easy to believe that those bending legs of yours once bore the gates of Gaza. "The strong men bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few." The daily meal is itself a drudgery; for the teeth have fallen out, and the masticating process is a fatigue and a trouble. And, still sorer privation, the eyes are dim: "Those that

look out of the windows are darkened." The landscape is a blot,—the very world is misty. The writer's inkhorn is allowed to dry,—and the virtuous woman who clothed all her household with scarlet, now lets her needles rust in the unopened case. Whatever may have been the pleasure derived from works of information or of fancy, that pleasure has faded; for, except in the brief winter's noon, the eye can no longer decipher the wavering lines, and even though, by reading aloud, friendship endeavours to supply their failure, the effort is defeated by the dulness of the ear. "The doors are shut in the street." Soft sounds no longer get in; and though, by bawling lustily, a son or a daughter may ask or answer some occasional question,—poor substitute, these volleyed and intermitting utterances,—poor substitute for the whispers of affection, and the sweet accents of familiar voices, and that calm, effortless participation in all the passing converse which were the privilege of happier days. But not only is the door of audience closed, the door of utterance is also shut. "The grinders have ceased," and with lips collapsed and organs all impaired, it is an effort to talk; and bending silently in on his own solitude, the veteran dozes in his elbow-chair the long summer hours when younger folks are busy. But, if he dozes in the day, he does not sleep at night. At the voice of the bird, at the crowing of the cock, although he does not hear it, he can keep his couch no longer. He rises, but not because he has any work to do, or any pleasure to enjoy. "He is afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way." He has neither enterprise nor courage. Once it was a treat to press up the mountain side and

enjoy the majestic prospect. Now, there is no high place which is not formidable; and even to the temple, it is a sad drawback that it stands on Zion, and that it is needful to "go up." "The almond-tree flourishes, and the grasshopper is burdensome." Tease him not with your idle affairs. In that load of infirmities he has encumbrance enough to carry, and though it be not the weight of a feather, do not augment his burden, who totters under the load of many years. For "desire has failed." You can grapple with heavy tasks,—you can submit to severe toil and protracted self-denial, for you have a purpose to serve —you have an end in view,—you have an inducement which countervails toil and cheats the self-denial. But with him there is no inducement, for there is no ulterior. "Desire has failed." "Barzillai, come and live with me at the palace," says David. And, answers Barzillai, "I am this day fourscore years old; can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried in the grave of my father and of my mother." Yes, that is all of "desire" that now remains,—the desire to die at home, and be buried in the family grave. And it is presently fulfilled. For now the old man goes to his long home, and his funeral walks the streets. The other morning his children came and found nothing but the ruin. The silver cord by which it was suspended had worn out at last, and the lamp of life had fallen to the ground,—the lights extinguished, and the golden bowl which fed

them broken.[1] The pitcher was shattered beside the fountain, and the cistern-wheel demolished. The eye was glass. The heart was still. And now dust goes back to dust,—for the soul has already gone to the God who gave it.

This description gives great emphasis to the exhortation of the outset. Remember thy Creator in youth—for if you do not remember Him then, your next leisure will be old age, and now you see what sort of leisure that is. How foolish to calculate on a time which not one youth in ten ever sees! How fatal to calculate on a time which, were it really come, you could turn to no account! Suppose that by an interposition of Omnipotence, you were lifted over the interval of years. Suppose that you, who are this day fifteen, were to awake to-morrow and find yourself fourscore. You know what it is to be very sleepy, and how tiresome it is to have people talking to you when you can scarcely keep your eyes open. You know what it is to be very sad, and when your heart is breaking you know how painful it is to be obliged to go about your daily tasks, and how little progress you make in this disconsolate diligence. You know what it is to be very sick; and if, when you cannot lift your head from the pillow, your little sister were bringing in lilies of the valley or new wall-flowers of the spring, you would look languidly at them, and soon put them away; or if they asked you to rise and take a ride, you would feel that they were mocking you. So is it with old age. It is drowsy, and sad, and full of infirmity; and to go to an old man who has never minded religion in

[1] Noyes.

his youth—to go to him and ask him to mind it now, would be like singing songs to a heavy heart; it would be like telling stories to a sleepy man; it would be like showing pictures or presenting nosegays to a tortured invalid. Were you now waking up to a sudden old age, you would find all over you a strange stupor; the windows darkened, and the street-doors closed. And you would find yourself very dull. These are days when you would say, "I have no pleasure in them." And like a man constantly in a dim disease, you would feel as if you never were hale enough to throw all your heart into the subject. And when pious friends pressed you and entreated you to think of your soul, you would say to them, "I cannot attend. Everything fatigues me now. The grasshopper is a burden. I know that the subject is awfully important. So much the worse for me—for I cannot take interest in anything. Desire has failed. My heart is weary—my soul is dim. Oh, leave me, leave me to repose!" Dear young friends give the Saviour your heart whilst you have a heart to give. Listen to His voice whilst your feelings still are fresh, and give Him your affections before your natures grow dry and arid.

For this is our next lesson: The Creator remembers in their old age, those who in youth remember Him. This is a woful picture, but some of the features would scarcely be recognised in an old disciple. At least it cannot be truly said by an aged Christian, "I have no pleasure;" and though there may be "clouds," he has also long and sunny intervals, and beyond this cloudy region he has blessed prospects. The peace which the Saviour gives to

His people, is a well of water springing up unto everlasting life; and there is nothing which keeps the feelings so fresh and youthful as a perennial piety. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." The young men of this world must grow old; and a few years hence the young man rejoicing in his youth shall be leaning on his staff for very feebleness. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." And if you want to know the difference between animal and spiritual youth, just compare that young spendthrift who bows his head like a bulrush, because he is conscious of debt and dishonesty and the disrespect of all around; compare him with that old, but frugal and contented saint, who carries his head erect as the palm-tree; and who, like the palm-tree, has constant sunshine. Compare that young profligate, who, after a night of riot, is now dragging his reluctant steps to his hated post, and with bleared eyes and throbbing temples, is yawning forth his vacancy, or ejaculating his chagrin; compare him with yonder serene and cheerful Christian, who, now that life's working-day is over, is resting from his labours for a little before he passes to his reward, and whose evening is so bright that the youngest are glad to come forth and bask in its beams. Compare that young sceptic, who has half persuaded himself into the disbelief of God and hereafter, and whose forced unbelief is often interrupted by intrusions of unwelcome conviction,—compare him with "Paul the aged" in prison, writing, "I know whom I have believed. I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have

kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

It is not very long ago since the biographies of two veterans appeared so simultaneously as almost to compel the contrast. Their declining days were somewhat similar. When getting old and feeling frail, they lost some of their dearest friends, and each lost his fortune. In these circumstances Sir Walter writes, "I used to think that a slight illness was a luxurious thing. . . . It is different in the latter stages—the old post-chaise gets more shattered at every turn; windows will not pull up, doors refuse to open, or, being open, will not shut again. There is some new subject of complaint every moment—your sicknesses come thicker and thicker; your sympathizing friends fewer and fewer. The recollection of youth, health, and uninterrupted powers of activity, neither improved nor enjoyed, is a poor strain of comfort. . . . Death has closed the long dark avenue upon loves and friendships; and I look at them as through the grated door of a burial-place filled with monuments of those who were once dear to me, with no insincere wish that it may open for me at no distant period, provided such be the will of God. I shall never see the threescore-and-ten, and shall be summed up at a discount. No help for it, and no matter either."[1] Recovering from a similar slight illness, Mr. Wilberforce remarked, "I can scarce understand why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one." And then, soon after, when his

[1] Scott's *Life*, Second Edition, vol. ix. pp. 60, 61.

only surviving daughter died, he writes, "I have often heard that sailors on a voyage will drink, 'Friends astern,' till they are half way over, then 'Friends ahead.' With me it has been 'friends ahead' this long time."[1]

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints; and God's kindness to His aged servants is often displayed in their gentle dismissal. In view of advancing years it has been sweetly sung by an English poetess:[2]—

"Life! we 've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather.
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear.

Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not good-night, but in some happier clime,
Bid me good-morning."

And the boon has oft been vouchsafed to the mature and Simeon-like disciple. Many of you remember "Father" Wilkinson, who preached the Golden Lecture so many years in London. One evening he told his daughter that he had long dreaded dying in his sleep, and that he had nightly prayed that it might not be so: "But this night," he added, "I have withdrawn that petition, and will leave this and all my matters in God's hands." It was the last link of bondage broken; the last fibre of self-will uprooted; and having thus completed his meetness, the Lord surprised His servant into blessedness that self-same night. Last week, in an old book we read a similar instance of a veteran's gentle home-going. In the days of Gallican persecution, Pastor Faber sat at the table of

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, vol. v. pp. 326, 328. [2] Mrs. Barbauld.

the Queen of Navarre one afternoon, when some other Protestant refugees were present. He was looking sad, and when they asked the reason, he replied with tears, "I am now a hundred years old, and when many young men are sealing their testimony with their blood, here have I, the craven, saved myself by flight." The Queen and her friends assured him that in consulting his own safety he had only fulfilled his Lord's command; and by and by he brightened up, and said, "Then nothing remains but that I go back to God; for I perceive that He calls me. But, first, if you please, I shall make my will." Then turning his eyes on the Queen he said, "I constitute you my executrix and residuary legatee. My books I bequeath to M. Gerard, the Preacher. My clothes and whatever else I have I give to the poor. The rest I commit to God." At which the Queen, smiling, asked, "Yes, but, Mr. James, what will revert to your residuary legatee?" "The charge of dispensing to the poor," he answered. "And I," exclaimed her Majesty, "accept it, and I vow that it is to me a more grateful heritage than if my royal brother had bequeathed to me the kingdom of France." Thereupon the old man, saying that he wanted rest, bade the guests a cheerful "good-night," and retired into an adjoining chamber. They thought that he was sleeping, and so he was. He had fallen asleep in a palace, and he awoke in heaven.[1]

My young friends, let me claim your kindness for the old. They are well entitled to your sympathy. Through this bright world they move mistily, and though they rise

[1] Witsii *Miscellanea Sacra*, tom. ii. p. 184.

as soon as the birds begin to sing, they cannot hear the music. Their limbs are stiff, their senses dull, and that body which was once their beautiful abode and their willing servant, has become a cage and a heavy clog. And they have outlived most of those dear companions with whom they once took sweet counsel.

> "One world deceased, another born,
> Like Noah they behold,
> O'er whose white hairs and furrow'd brows
> Too many suns have roll'd."[1]

Make it up to them as well as you can. Be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. On their way to the sanctuary be their supporting staff, and though it may need an extra effort to convey your words into their blunted ear, make that effort;—for youth is never so beautiful as when it acts as a guardian angel, or a ministering spirit to old age. And should extreme infirmity or occasional fretfulness try your patience, remember that to all intents you were once the same, and may be the same again;—in second childhood, as in first, the debtor to others' patience and tenderness and magnanimity.

And, my aged friends, let me commend you to the sympathy of the Saviour. The merciful High Priest knows your frame. The dull ear and the dim eye are no obstacles to intercourse with Him; and the frequent infirmities prayer can convert into pleas for His compassion. "What are you doing?" said a minister, as he one day visited a feeble old man, who dwelt in a windy hovel. "What are you doing?" as he saw him sitting beneath

[1] Young.

the dripping rafters in his smoky chamber, with his Bible open on his knee. "Oh, sir! I am sitting under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to my taste!" That is dainty food, which even Barzillai might discern. Feed upon the promises; draw water from the wells of salvation. And when one sight after another fades away from your darkening eyes, look more and more to Jesus;—for if He be your joy, your hope, your life, the faster you are clothed with the snows of eld, the sooner will you renew your youth in the realms of immortality.

> "In age and feebleness extreme,
> Who shall a helpless worm redeem?
> Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
> Strength of my failing flesh and heart;
> Oh, could I catch a smile from Thee,
> And drop into eternity!"

April 6, 1851.

XIX.

THE WICKET-GATE.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man."—ECCLES. XII. 13.

GOD is Almighty. Some beings concentrate in themselves a large amount of power. Some of our fellow-mortals have possessed so much vital energy,—minds so inventive and vigorous, as to leave their impress on a realm or on a continent; and when you ask, Who engineered this road? who devised that law? who erected yonder monument? you are amazed to find everywhere the trace of one imperial intellect. But ascend into Heaven or plunge into Hades,—take the wings of the morning and visit the furthest isles of Immensity, and there is one Presence which will still invest you, and one great footstep which still you must fail to measure. Who made this worm which grovels in the clay? who made yonder seraph who hovers round the Light of lights? Who lit the glow-worm's taper? who filled with bright millenniums the sphery lamp of yonder sun? Who gives this dancing atom its afternoon of life? Who is it that has kindled immortality in the soul of man? Who is it that fills that hive with industry, that home

with peaceful joy, that heaven with adoring ecstasy? The Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty.

God is all-wise. When as yet nothing existed except the Great I AM, to His infinite understanding all combinations of existence were present. They stood forth so many beautiful and Divine ideas, and from this panopticon of all the possible, His holy wisdom chose the best, and willed that universe which is. And now that alongside of all the past His boundless comprehension includes the furthest future, each evolving incident owes its being to that Providence which is particular because it is universal; and nothing comes into existence which is a surprise to Omniscience, or which does not instantly find its place prepared in the glorious whole: so that from the falling sparrow to the dying martyr, and from the fortunes of some poor human family to the events of an Incarnation, all history is an anthem ascribing "to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, THE ONLY WISE GOD," "honour and glory for ever and ever."

God is all-holy. He is the infinite Excellence. That river of pleasures which makes glad the celestial city, is just so much of His goodness as God is pleased to reveal; but the full fountain remains in Jehovah Himself,—an ocean which Gabriel's line cannot fathom, and athwart which the archangel's wing cannot traverse,—an abyss of brightness of which immensity is only the margin, and of which each holy intelligence is but a sparkling drop. Yet, little as our searching can find out God, we know that His name is just the highest name for good-

ness and blessedness. We know that His is the mind to which evil is the supreme impossibility. We know that He is the God of truth, and without iniquity: just and right is He. Amidst the multitude of promises which His munificence has prompted Him to make, we know that not one good word hath failed, but every Yea hath found its Amen. Amidst the multitude of creatures over which His sovereignty extends, we know that there exists no instance of unkindness, or neglect, or oppression. And amidst the multitude of thoughts and emotions which make up the joys of Deity, we know that there is not one malevolent affection; but all is condescension to His creatures, care for their well-being, and delectation in their joy.

But if God be the only good and the all-inclusive joy, a creature's blessedness must consist in a right relation, and a right affection towards Him. To be separated from the supreme felicity, must itself be misery; and to entertain unkind or hostile feelings towards infinite Excellence, must itself be the deepest depravity.

What, then, is a right relation to God? It is that coincidence with His good pleasure, and that compliance with His revealed will, which Solomon calls "keeping His commandments." He is our Creator, and whether we will or will not, we must be His creatures. But He is also the King of the universe, and we ought to be His loyal subjects. And in Christ Jesus He is prepared to become our Father, and we should reciprocate the matchless condescension, and with wonder and astonishment exclaiming, "Our Father which art in Heaven," we should become the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

And what is the right feeling towards God? Almighty and all-wise, we should devoutly adore Him. Our righteous Ruler, we should with cheerful submission acquiesce in His disposal, and with strenuous activity should fulfil His commands. Our kind and merciful Father, we should give Him unhesitating love and confidence without reserve. And altogether, did we realize His perfections and our own position, it would become our "chief end to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."

Many, however, will feel that the great difficulty lies in getting into this right relation. Allowing it to be the creature's highest end to glorify and enjoy the Creator, how shall a sinful creature begin to taste this blessedness? How shall I assure myself that the Most High is no longer offended with me? And how shall I bring myself to that state in which my Creator shall be able to regard me with habitual complacency? Is the process very arduous and very long? Must I relinquish my present calling, and give myself wholly to the business of working out my peace with God? Had I not better retire into a desert or a hermitage? And how long will the ordeal last? In how many months or years may I begin to hope that God is propitious, and that heaven will be mine?

Some people once lived in a Happy Isle, but for their misdeeds they had been banished. Their place of exile was a cheerless coast; but it lay within distant sight of their former home. Soon after their expulsion a message had come from their injured Sovereign, offering to all that pleased an amnesty. Few minded it. They had grown

sour and sullen, and they tried to persuade themselves that the earth-holes in which they burrowed were more comfortable than the mansions of his land, and that the mallows among their bushes were more nutritious than all the fruits of his gardens. One man, however, was of a different mind. He was a musing, thoughtful person. Often might you have seen him pacing the beach when the rays of evening shone on the Happy Isle, and whilst the sea-bird wailed over his head and the wrack crackled under his feet, from his own dreary prison he wistfully eyed the forests on its coast, and the mountains of purple streaked with silver which sat enthroned in its interior; and as he fancied that he could sometimes hear faint murmurs of its joy, he wished that he were there. One morning when he awoke it struck him that the opposite shore was unusually nigh, and so low was the tide that he fancied he might easily ford it, or swim across. And so he hastened forth. First over the dry shingle, then over the sad and solid sand, from which, with scarce a ripple, the sea had smoothly folded down, he hurried on till he reached the damper strand, where streams of laggard water still were trickling, and then he was astonished at his own delusion; for it was still a mighty gulf, and even whilst he gazed the tide was rising. But another time he tried another plan. To the right of his dwelling the line of coast stretched away in a succession of cliffs and headlands, till the view was bounded by a lofty promontory which seemed to touch the further side. To this promontory he resolved to make a pilgrimage, in the hope that it would transport him to the long-sought

realm. The road was often a steep clamber, and for many an hour the headland seemed only to flee away. But after surmounting many a slope and swell, at last he reached it. With eager steps he ran along the ridge, half-hoping that it was the isthmus which would bear him to the Blessed Isle. Ah, no! He reached its extremest verge, and here is that inexorable ocean still weltering at its base. Baffled in this last hope, and faint with his ineffectual toil, he flung himself on the stones and wept. But, by and by, he noticed off the shore a little boat, with whose appearance he was quite familiar. It used to ride at anchor opposite his own abode, and had done so for ever so long; but, like his neighbours, he had got so used to it that it never drew his notice. Now, however, seeing it there, he looked at it, and as he looked it neared him. It came close up to the rocks where he was seated. It was a beautiful boat, with snowy sail and golden prow, and a red cross was its waving pennon. There was one on board, and only one. His raiment was white and glistening, and his features betokened whence he came. "Son of man," he said, "why weepest thou?" "Because I cannot reach the Blessed Isle." "Canst thou trust thyself with me?" the stranger asked. The poor wayfarer looked at the little skiff leaping lightly on the waves, and he wondered, till he looked again at the Pilot's kind and assuring countenance, and then he said, "I can." And no sooner had he stepped on board, than swift as a sunbeam, it bore him to the land of light; and, with many a welcome from the Pilot's friends, he found himself among its happy citizens, clothed in their bright raiment,

and free to all their privileges, as now a subject of their King.

The happy isle is peace with God,—that position which man occupied whilst innocent. The dreary land is that state of alienation and misery into which fallen man is banished. The little skiff denotes the only means by which the sinner may pass from nature's alienation over into the peace of God. It is a means not of the sinner's devising, but of God's providing. It is the ATONEMENT, and He who so kindly invites sinners to avail themselves of it is the Lord Jesus himself.

I may suppose the case of a hearer who longs for acceptance with God. At present you feel like an exile looking to a distant Eden with a gulf between. You feel that between you and God's favour there rolls a tide of trespasses and sins which all your efforts cannot get over. Sometimes, like the poor outcast on that bright morning, you have flattered yourself that the separating interval had narrowed, and if all went favourably you did not despair of finding yourself ere long in the climes of ascertained salvation. But even then, like a broad and powerful tide, the current of worldliness set in again, and the interval betwixt God and your own soul again grew vast as ever; or the dark stream of guilt began once more to roar and deepen. Therefore, ceasing to hope that your soul's salvation would come about spontaneously, you set to work on purpose to achieve it. Like one who would bridge across the mighty channel; or rather, like one who sets out on a pilgrimage to yonder inviting promontory,—you go about to establish a righteousness of your own.

You resolve to read so many chapters and to pray so many times a day. You determine that you will henceforth never more be angry, nor deceitful, nor neglectful of your trust. You try to think holy thoughts and make your own mind spiritual. And in this way you hope to go on by degrees till you are really good,—so good that you may be at last forgiven. But how far must the traveller march around the coast of Europe before he arrives in Britain? And how many things must the sinner do in a state of nature, before he finds himself in a state of grace? They that are in the flesh cannot please God, and instead of being good in order to be forgiven, you had need to be forgiven as the first movement towards becoming good. The separating gulf is too deep for the tallest specimen of virtue to ford, and too wide for the sincerest repentance or the most faultless morality to bridge over: and were you confronting the realities of the case, you would find that Christless painstaking is only a pilgrimage along a sea-girt promontory. Peace with God is not a boon which it requires good deeds to purchase or prayers to insure; but peace with God is a gift from God, already come from heaven and awaiting your acceptance. And, just as the vexed wanderer lifted up his eyes, and in the boat, with its benignant pilot, recognised the little skiff which had so long hovered unheeded near his own abode; so, were the Spirit of God to make you earnest now,—were he convincing you of sin or of the futility of your own exertions, you would see your salvation in some thrice-told tale—some text with which you have been familiar long ago. "Eternal life is the gift of God."

"God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "To as many as received him Jesus gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "The Son of man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have eternal life." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Like some dim object anchored near your dwelling, texts like these are associated with your earliest memory. These texts are gospels. Any one of them is such "a faithful saying," that fully realized and implicitly credited it would carry your soul to heaven. Any one of them is an ark of salvation, with none less than the Friend of sinners in it; and you have only to be persuaded of its good-will and its trustworthiness, so as to transfer your immortal interests to the Saviour's keeping, and you will soon discover that TRUST IN CHRIST IS PEACE WITH GOD.

A justifying righteousness is not a privilege which you buy, but a present which you receive. It is not a result which you accomplish, nor a reward which you earn, but it is a gratuity which you accept. It is the "gift of righteousness,"—a gift promiscuous to sinners of our race, —a gift as wide as the human "whosoever;" a gift outstanding, which was within the reach of your earliest intelligence had you been so disposed, and which is not yet withdrawn,—a gift which it needs neither prayer to bring nearer, nor a price before or after to make surer, but which it only needs your open hand, your open heart to make your personal possession;—not a bargain, but a boon; not an achievement, but an acquiescence; the gift of right-

eousness;—the righteousness of God which demands, not that we deserve it, but that we "submit" to it. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ, God's righteousness is declared through the remission of sins that are past. And being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!

Thus it is that the right relation between God and the sinner is established; a relation which borrows all its security and blessedness from the sinner's substitute, God's own Son. Our redemption is in Christ, and it is in the Beloved that we are accepted. Our safety is entirely in the Saviour whom we trust. He is our peace. Immanuel is the door. It is by Him that we enter into the fold and become the sheep of His Father.

And when once the right relation is brought about, the right affection must follow. It could not come before. It did not come whilst the portion of goods held out, and amidst his riotous living the prodigal was jeering at the decorum and dulness of his father's house. And it did not come when the penniless outcast was envying the swine, and yet was too proud to go home. And it did not come when crushed and crest-fallen the runaway bent his steps towards the forsaken threshold, and all his thought was how to propitiate an angry father, and how if he could only get a hearing, he might get leave to labour for his food, and so, from an out-door menial, gradually work his way back to the hearth and the family board. But when, instead of an angry and upbraiding stranger, he found a yearning parent; and, instead of the menial's

garb, saw himself invested in the honoured guest's best robe; and instead of the meanest hireling's place, was installed at a sumptuous festival: when he saw those eyes suffused with all the love of delighted fatherhood, and remembered how that father's tears had fallen,—then it came—the filial affection came; the long-dormant instinct of sonship revived, and the love of a fervent gratitude mingled,—so that in all the Holy Land the fullest heart that night was the restored and forgiven prodigal.

And even so, that filial emotion which here and throughout the Old Testament is often called "fear;" that blended emotion of reverence, trust, and affection, can only arise where the spirit of sonship reciprocates God's revealed aspect of compassionate and forthgoing fatherliness. It matters little whether we call the affection fear, or, with the first and great commandment, call it love. In that fear which realizes God's fatherliness, there cannot be terror; and in the love which recollects that its Father is GOD, there cannot be petulant boldness.

Fear God, therefore, for this is the great duty of man. To love Him with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, is the first and great commandment; and till once Jehovah is supreme, an orderly and respectable life is only rebellion without violence, and even benevolence without godliness is only a beautiful impiety.

April 13, 1851.

XX.

GREEN PASTURES.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man."—ECCLES. XII. 13.

"THIS is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." To get this knowledge is to enter into blessedness. Reconciliation to God is like entering the gate of a beautiful avenue, which conducts to a splendid mansion. But that avenue is long, and in some places it skirts the edge of dangerous cliffs; and therefore, to save the traveller from falling over where he would be dashed to pieces, it is fenced all the way by a quickset hedge. That hedge is the commandments. They are planted there that we may do ourselves no harm. But, like a fence of the fragrant brier, they regale the pilgrim who keeps the path, and they only hurt him when he tries to break through. Temperance, justice, truthfulness; purity of speech and behaviour; obedience to parents; mutual affection; sanctification of the Sabbath; the reverent worship of God;—all these are righteous requirements, and in keeping them there is a great reward. Happy he who only knows the precept in the perfume which it sheds, and who, never having kicked

against the pricks, has never proved the sharpness of its thorns!

In its happy influence, religion, or a filial compliance with the will of God, includes "the whole of man." It is self-contained felicity.

A new heart itself is happiness. The rain as it falls from the firmament is never poisonous; but by the time it filters through strata filled with lead or copper, it may become so pernicious that whosoever drinks of the water dies. The juice of the grape, as it flows from the fermenting vat, is generous wine; but if the wine-skin which receives it is old and musty, or if it be poured into a jar of acidulous pottery, it soon grows sour and vapid. Gifts as they come from God are always good and perfect; but by the time that they have distilled through our murmuring spirits, they assume another character. From the way he speaks of them, you would fancy that the worldling's joy had all been drawn from Marah; or that, however carefully he had covered over his own cistern, the star Wormwood had dropped into it, and changed the whole into a deadly bitter. The truth is, his mind is its own Marah, and his morose and murmuring nature is the Wormwood which renders acrid to the taste the mercies sent from God. But Christianity is a new creation. The Gospel renovates the soul; and, putting a right spirit in the man, it makes him a blessed being by making him a RIGHT RECIPIENT. When the water is as clear as was the well of Bethlehem; or when the wine flows as rich as the vintage of Lebanon,—all that is needful is a pitcher of crystal or a goblet of silver, which, by infusing no new

element, will preserve its freshness and purity. And when gifts are so good as the Gospel and the promises;—so good as our kindred and friends;—so good as the flowers of the field and the breath of new summer,—it only needs an honest heart which takes them as they come, and which tastes unaltered the goodness of God that is in them. This is what the worldling wants; this new heart is what the God and Father of our Lord Jesus offers to you—to me.

The very faculty of joy is the gift of the Holy Ghost. There is a canker in the heart of man which hinders happiness even when the materials are most abundant; and it is mournful to observe how little gladness is felt even when corn and wine most abound. In the midst of affluence still anxious, the munificence of the Creator cannot give contentment to worldlings and worldly professors; but whilst the green pastures re-echo their grumblings, they may see their peevish faces reflected in those still waters to which their kind Shepherd has led them. It needs more than good and perfect gifts to awaken melody and praise: and unless the Spirit of God make it a thankful heart, the providence of God cannot make it a happy existence. But when the Comforter is come, He gives a new heart and creates a right spirit. He heals the canker of the churl and sweetens the bitterness of the misanthrope; and, by imparting the faculty of joy, He has often exalted life into a jubilee, and made a very humble dwelling ring with hallelujahs. Ever since it was broken at the Fall, the heart of man is a cracked pitcher from which happiness runs out with

amazing rapidity;—and the finer the fluid—the more subtle the element of joy,—the faster does it trickle through; and often it is not till the last drop is oozing,—it is not till the latest film is regretfully vanishing, that the soul knows it ought to have been happy, and is sorry for not knowing it sooner.[1] Far otherwise is it with the Christian's pleasures. He who has made him a new creature, has given him a new capacity of receiving and retaining joy. The new heart does not leak; at least, there is one gladness there which will abide to all eternity, and which, even when it has for a season disappeared, needs nothing but the jolts of sorrow to shake it up again in all its sparkling zest and fragrant exhilaration. The soul into which God has put the gladness can never be empty of all joy; for the "joy of salvation" heals the broken heart, and so long as itself remains it makes it possible for other joys to stay.

A devout disposition is happiness. It is happiness, whether outward things go well or ill. A comfortable home, fond kindred, health, a successful calling, are sweet mercies when you accept them direct from God,—thus rendering dearer to yourself, at once the Giver and the gifts. But these mercies may, one by one, withdraw. Lover and friend may be put far from you, and your acquaintance may vanish into secret; your house may dilapidate; your industrious efforts may be defeated;

[1] "The sweetness that pleasure has in it
Is always so slow to come forth,
That seldom, alas! till the minute
It dies, do we know half its worth."
—Moore's *Melodies*.

and your prosperous state may be exchanged for penury. But "although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet you will rejoice in the Lord, and will joy in the God of your salvation." With shattered constitution you may find yourself confined to your couch or your chamber, and in pain and depression you may miss that presence which would have been a "sunshine in this shady place." But, lonely and languid, you can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Public affairs may take a sombre turn, and in the growth of pauperism, or in the wider gulf which sunders the classes, there may be prognostics of uproar and anarchy; or in one of those fits of infatuation which occasionally seize society, you may stand aghast at educated men flinging away their human rights and their reason, and surrendering to a grim superstition which puts out their eyes and binds them in the fetters of Babylon;[1] or under the spurning hoof of some colossal despotism, you may hear human hearts crushing, as the seaweed crackles under the schoolboy's wanton heel, and in vain sympathy you may burst your own; or, when in volcanic reaction pent-up indignation explodes, and thrones and altars are hurled through mid-heaven, whilst, like grass under lava, civilisation is overwhelmed beneath

[1] 2 Kings xxv. 7.

the fiery tide, and, as it spirts into the air, the gory geyser tells where the earth has opened her mouth, and swallowed alive a weltering multitude ;—in moments like these, when the most hopeful philanthropy is paralysed, and "men's hearts fail them for fear," the believer can sing, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea :" and beyond all the crash and the turmoil, his purer ear can catch the cadence of heavenly harpers, and through all the smoke of burning mountains quenched in boiling seas, his penetrating eye can glimpse the tokens of a bright Epiphany ; and from the reeling soil, he lifts up his head, knowing that redemption draweth nigh. Oh, brethren ! in those solemn conjunctures which prefigure final judgment ; in those awful conflicts where man appears not so much the combatant as the arena ; in those Armageddons where man cannot look to man, for the contending powers are Jehovah and Apollyon—how blessed to have a friend in Omnipotence, and a citadel within the tabernacle of the Most High !

A benevolent disposition is happiness. The first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul : and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To keep these two commandments is the whole of man. The two feelings are very different. It is with an adoring complacency that you love the ever-blessed God, desiring that His glory should be advanced, and that His will should be the mind of the universe. It is with an affectionate

good-will that you love your fellow-creatures, desiring that they should be happy in loyalty to God. The one love is simply outgoing; the other ascends. The one is kindness; the other is full of worship. The one is filial devotion; the other is fraternal fondness.

When a rose-bud is formed, if the soil is soft and the sky is genial, it is not long before it bursts; for the life within is so abundant that it can no longer contain it all—but in blossomed brightness and swimming fragrance it must needs let forth its joy, and gladden all the air. And if, when thus ripe, it refused to expand, it would quickly rot at heart, and die. And Christian charity is just piety with its petals fully spread—developing itself, and making it a happier world. The religion which fancies that it loves God, when it never evinces love to its brother, is not piety, but a poor mildewed theology—a dogma with a worm in its heart.

Benevolence is blessedness. It is God's life in the soul, diffusing in kind emotions, and good offices, and friendly intercessions; but, unlike other expenditures, the more it is diffused, the more that life increases of which it is the sign; and to abound in love one towards another, is to abound in hope towards God.

This was Solomon's calamity. In his auspicious outset he lived for others. To make Jehovah's temple exceedingly magnificent, and to see his people prosperous, were the great desires of his forthgoing patriotism and piety. But in a mysterious moment he was forsaken by God's Spirit. To his introverted egotism his own interest became more urgent than all the universe, and the saint

and the patriot became a selfist. The lily crept back into its bulb. It said, I am myself the summer. Yonder sun shines, because I am to be seen. This air is balm, because it encircles me. I will go down into myself, and what a self-sufficing Eden it will be when all my glory is reserved for Solomon! And down it went; but though its disappearance left less of summer in the world, nothing but winter was found below. And it was not till he took another thought, and resolved once more to keep these two commands, that aught of his old glory came again.

Benevolence is blessedness; and if the present age is happier than some that have gone before it, a chief reason is because its heart is kinder. Doubtless, the amount of material comfort is amazingly increased; but this is not enough. Man is not a dormouse; and however warmly he lines his nest, and however snug the pose of orbicular self-complacency into which he rolls himself, he cannot become his own all-in-all. Material comforts multiply; but these alone have not made it a happier age. It is happier because it is kinder. We would rather convert the Turks than kill them. We would rather see France virtuous and God-fearing, than see it subject to Britain. We would rather teach the Jews the Gospel, than torture from them their money hoards. This is the age which wishes well to the slave, and has paid a great price for his freedom. This is the age which wishes well to the heathen, and is paying, if not a great price, yet a greater than was ever paid before, for his Christian civilisation. This is the age which wishes well to the poor and the

outcast, and which is taking great pains to enlighten his mind and exalt his condition. God forbid that we should boast. Man's evil tendencies are the same as ever; but if the Father of mercies has somewhat softened the spirit of this age, let us not forget to bless His holy name. We think He has. We think on the whole that the world is happier, because of late the Lord has made it somewhat kinder. And its happiness will advance in proportion as it learns to realize that object of the Advent,—"On earth peace; good-will towards men."

Malevolence is misery. It is the mind of Satan. He is the great "enemy,"—an outcast from all joy, and an opponent of all goodness and all blessedness. His mind is enmity against God; enmity against angels fallen and unfallen; enmity against man both redeemed and reprobate; and, because thus hateful and hating, utterly unhappy. And the carnal mind is so far Satanic because it is enmity against God; just as the misanthrope is so far Satanic because he is enmity against his fellows. On the other hand, benevolence is happiness. It is the mind of God, whose tender mercies are over all His works, and who joys in the joy of His creation. And hence it comes to pass that some who have never tasted the full blessedness of piety, have enjoyed many sweet satisfactions in the exercise of benevolence. "Oh, world," says the Emperor Antoninus, "all things are suitable to me which are suitable to thee. Nothing is too early or too late for me which is seasonable for thee. All is fruit to me which thy seasons bring forth. Shall any man say, O beloved city of Cecrops! and wilt not thou say, O beloved city of

God!" "And you, my brothers," exclaimed the German Richter, after he had spent some years in severely satirizing men and manners—seized with a sudden compunction, or rather yielding to a genial visitation,—"And you, my brothers, I will love you more. I will create for you more joy. I will no longer turn my comic powers to torment you; but fantasy and wit shall be united to find consolation and cheerfulness for the most limited of life's relations."[1] He kept his word. Moroseness and moodiness fled away, and from that period onward there are few lives not saintly, on which care's shadow has lain so lightly. But if there be such a solace in mere benevolence; if there be such a Divine delightsomeness in drying tears and diffusing happiness; if some have passed a very pleasant life who were only kind-hearted without being Christian;—how incomparably more blessed are those who unite the two,—whose brotherly kindness is the fruit of faith, and whose charity is a devout benevolence! the John who, basking in the rays of uncreated love, returns into the midst of our mortality with a glow which ever since has raised the temperature of time! the Paul who, catching the spirit of his Master, is the daily medium through which Heaven's kindness finds its way to the heart of our humanity, and whose very soul, like a libation on a sacrifice, goes up a sweet savour to God, and leaves on earth a grateful memory!

Such is true Religion. The Gospel is grace abounding, and vital Christianity is that Gospel met by an abundant gratitude. It is that truth discovered which converts

[1] Richter's *Autobiography*, vol. ii. p. 196.

into a lover of his Creator and his brethren, the man who was an unholy and unthankful self-seeker. That wanderer who, along vistas of vanity, was ever arriving at blanker vexation, it transfers into the way of peace; and turning his face Godward, it sets him on the path which shines more and more unto the perfect day.

Seek then, my brethren, loving thoughts of God. Pray for them. Cherish them. Strive to realize His true character. Look not at the distortions drawn by the lurid fancy of superstition; look not at the dark pictures sketched by your own guilty conscience. But look at the Bible revelation. Look at Immanuel. Behold the brightness of the Father's glory—behold the Word incarnate, full of grace and truth. Surrender to the manifestation. Let your aspect towards Jehovah be the reciprocal of His aspect towards you. Look towards Jesus, and with the pleasant countenance wherewith He views His beloved Son, He will behold you, O looking transgressor! I should rather say, O justified believer! And by praise, and bright obedience, and cheerful trust, seek to augment your love to your heavenly Father. When happy thoughts come into your mind, let the thought of God come with them; and when you go into beautiful or attractive scenes, let the reconciled Presence go with you; till at last earth is suffused with heaven, and, with the immortal morning spread upon the mountains, death is done away and the dark valley superseded.

And seek, as a fruit of the Spirit, love. As a Christian principle, cultivate a broad benevolence, and by and by you will come to feel it as a delightful and spontaneous

instinct. Having, in virtue of your redeemed relation, "a covenant with the beasts of the field and with the creeping things of the ground," you will come to share the creature-ward complacency of that kind Creator whose tender mercies are over all His works, and perhaps may realize the description with which you have sometimes been charmed :—

> "In the silence of his face I read
> His overflowing spirit. Birds and beasts,
> And the mute fish that glances in the stream,
> And harmless reptile coiling in the sun,
> And gorgeous insect moving in the air,
> The fowl domestic, and the household dog—
> In his capacious mind he loved them all.
> Rich in love
> And sweet humanity, he was, himself,
> To the degree that he desired, beloved."[1]

But even this creature-ward kindliness will profit you little unless it be combined with that sublime love towards your immortal fellows which constitutes Christian charity. Love man as man. Fallen and sinful, he is still your brother. Pity the sinner even whilst you abhor the sin: and, in order to deepen and purify your compassion, let it assume a practical form. Ask yourself, What am I doing to make it a holier and so a happier world? And if you find that you are doing nothing in this Divine direction, be not surprised that there is still a crook in your lot and a discomfort in your spirit. Existence will only run smooth when you learn to be a fellow-worker with God. And love the believing brethren. Rejoice in their increase. Rejoice in their prosperity. Glorify the grace of

[1] Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Book ii.

God in them, and be so heartily solicitous for their progress and improvement as really to help them forward. Thus loving without dissimulation, you will soon find yourself the centre of much affection in return, and whatever joy you diffuse you will find it all returning with increase into your own bosom.

April 20, 1851.

LESSONS FROM THE GREAT BIOGRAPHY.

PREFACE.

At one time it was the purpose of the writer to connect together the leading incidents recorded by the four Evangelists, translating them, as it were, into modern language, and supplying a few of those historical and topographical details for which we are indebted to recent research. If executed with reverence and judgment, the author believes that such Memoirs of the Saviour's Ministry would be to many a welcome and useful work. For the present, however, he is deterred from an attempt which, like every labour of love, craves a large amount of leisure. But having given to his own congregation a few specimens of the Gospel Story thus rendered, he now ventures to publish them, retaining the practical reflections with which they were accompanied, and in the hope that such friends as are kind enough to look into the volume will excuse its fragmentary character, its important omissions, and its occasional disregard of chronological sequence.

London, *May* 1, 1857.

EARLY INCIDENTS.

I. PRE-EXISTENCE.

In ordinary biographies, a birth is the beginning. It was in the year 1483 that the mind to which we owe the Reformation commenced its existence; for it was then that Martin Luther was born. It was in London that the career began to which England is indebted for its great epic poem, and that other from which science received its mightiest modern impulse; for it was there that Milton and Bacon first saw the light of life. Having told us this, the biographer feels that he has begun at the beginning; and with this statement coincides the consciousness of the individual himself. For, whatever the old philosophy may have dreamed about the pre-existence of spirit and the transmigration of souls, no man could ever seriously say that he had led another life before he was born. No man could ever tell incidents and experiences which had occurred to him in a state of existence anterior to the present. With us, to all intents, our birth is our beginning.

In the whole history of our species there has been only one exception. That exception occurred in the Holy Land eighteen hundred years ago. There was a Prophet

in Galilee remarkable for the profusion and splendour of His miracles, and yet more remarkable for the beautiful innocence and majestic elevation of His entire career; and among the other peculiarities of a character unique and outstanding this was one: He was constantly and familiarly speaking of a life which He had led elsewhere; and though He had been born at Bethlehem in the reign of Augustus, it was evident that He never regarded that birth as *His* beginning. Speaking always of God as His Father, on the eve of His expected martyrdom He concluded a solemn address to His chosen friends in these unusual words—"The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father." And so far back did that existence extend which He had spent elsewhere, that His words once leading the Jews to think that He claimed an age anterior to ancient Abraham, He not only allowed it, but in words of deep significance answered, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Nay, so remote was that anterior existence of His, that He speaks of it as older than creation itself; and in the freest and most unreserved forth-pouring of His soul which the record has preserved—in that prayer which wound up the work given Him to do, and amidst whose closing accents He passed to the final conflict—in the explicitness of a high conjuncture, and in the fervour of filial confidence, His language is all aglow with recollections of that blissful association with His Divine Father which He had enjoyed in the depths of a dateless eternity. "And now, O Father,

glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. Unto the men whom thou gavest me I have given the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

In harmony with which consciousness of His own is the style of His inspired biographers. True, they relate His birth; but with them His birth is not His beginning. It is His arrival from another sphere; it is His inauguration in human nature. It is an advent, an incarnation; it is not a new being called forth from the regions of nonentity. It is our world receiving a pre-existent visitor; it is our humanity enshrining a celestial occupant; and when they chronicle the fact, Evangelists use language which at once lifts our eyes from the cradle, and sends our imaginations backwards far beyond the reign of the Cæsars. In the prophetic description of His birthplace, Matthew quotes the words of Micah, of which the full context is, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." And he does not scruple to apply to the infant born there the words of Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which, being

interpreted, is, God with us." And in his allusion to the same great incident, John tells us, "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD; AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH."

As we purpose to review some of the incidents in the earthly life of Jesus Christ, it is right at the outset to avow our belief that His life on earth was a mere incident in an existence which had no beginning. We deeply feel that "great is the mystery of godliness;" at the same time we feel that revelation leaves us no alternative. If we accept the New Testament as a truthful record, we must receive the Lord Jesus as "God manifest in the flesh." The proofs of this lie scattered over all the Scriptures, and they have frequently been collected and arranged with admirable distinctness and irresistible cogency. At present, we must be content to indicate a few of those considerations which, we apprehend, will be deemed by candid minds conclusive.

1. And our first appeal is to Christ's own language. There are some subjects to which He seldom adverted, apparently reserving it for another teacher to unfold them. For example, He seldom spoke of His *office*. Scarcely ever do we find Him in words express avowing His Messiahship; and it is only now and then, when the avowal was to answer some important purpose, or when to withhold it would have been disingenuous and misleading, that "he confessed and denied not," "I am the Christ." For instance, when the inquirer at Jacob's Well, impressed with His prophetic insight, and just as they were about to be interrupted by the return of the disciples from the

village,—when she said, "When Messias cometh, he will tell us all things," at such a moment, and after such a hint, to remain silent would have been to leave a soul in darkness; and so Jesus answered, "I that speak unto thee am he." In the same way, when Peter made his memorable acknowledgment—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and when the high priest, in his judicial capacity, demanded, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God," to have kept silence would have been to perplex His disciples and bewilder the world; and accordingly He gave an answer which left no doubt as to His Messianic character.

And yet, although seldom in words express claiming to be the Christ, He was constantly assuming it. Most of the miracles He wrought pointed this way, and were ever and anon suggesting to spectators the question, "When Messias cometh, will he do more miracles than this man doeth?" and of His public sermons, as well as of His confidential addresses to His disciples, the drift was all in this direction—issuing invitations to the one, and giving instructions as to their future work to the other, which in the case of any besides the promised Saviour, would have been irrelevant and meaningless. And as in regard to His office, so in regard to His *person*. As He seldom proclaimed His errand, so He did not often enunciate His intrinsic greatness: but as He was content to fulfil His mission, so He allowed His glory to reveal itself; and it was only when the interests of truth and goodness called for the confession, that the language of tacit assumption was

exchanged for an articulate and audible avowal. But just as before the hostile high priest He confessed His office, so before the hostile populace He once and again confessed His celestial origin, "I and the Father are one;" "Before Abraham was, I am;" and the Jews, who well understood the language, took up stones to stone him as a blasphemer; "because he who was a man made himself equal with God." And just as to Peter in the presence of the twelve, He admitted His Messiahship, so to Philip in the presence of the rest He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" And just as to confirm the faith of the Samaritan inquirer, He said, "I that speak unto thee am Messias," so when to the faltering Thomas He gave the overwhelming token which transformed his incredulity into adoration, to his exclamation, "My Lord, and my God!" Jesus answered, "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed," and accepted the God-confessing epithet. When we advert to the entire character of Jesus—when we remember how He "emptied himself and became of no reputation"—when we remember that it was His way not so much to lift up His voice as to let His light shine, so that His deeds rather than His words bewrayed His intrinsic majesty—when we remember how truthful and ingenuous, and how jealous of God's glory He ever was, these repeated avowals acquire a vastly greater significance; and taken in unison with the entire style of the Saviour's deportment, which was nothing less than a continuous response to the voice from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son," we are shut up to

the conclusion that in His own consciousness Jesus was God.

The opposite assumption, if fatal to the Saviour's divinity, would also appear fatal to His simplicity and godly sincerity. It would imply that in a season the most solemn of all His history, when a disciple prayed his departing Master, "Shew us the Father," instead of answering the prayer and showing what was truly equivalent to the Father, He had appeased the anxiety of Philip with a play of words or a paradox. It would imply that "the Light of the World"—the reformer who was so possessed with the zeal of God's house that He drove all intruders from the temple courts—was so little averse to usurp the Divine prerogative, that when again and again the Jews understood Him as asserting His equality with God, rather than undeceive them, He allowed them to take up stones to stone Him. It would imply that He who quoted to the tempter that Scripture, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," in accepting Himself the worship of Peter and Thomas and others, was after all less scrupulous than the angel who started back from John's adoration, "See thou do it not; for I also am of thy fellow-servants the prophets: WORSHIP GOD."

2. The consciousness of the Saviour is amply borne out by the language of the sacred writers. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son—the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, believed on in the world, received up into glory." "Let

this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." "For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."[1] Expressions like these, direct and indirect, constantly occurring, show that to the habitual thoughts of primitive discipleship, the Saviour was nothing less than Divine. Nor is it only in didactic discourse that such assertions are continually repeated, but the whole apostolic history goes on the assumption of the Saviour's omnipotence and omnipresence; and it is impossible to read the Book of Acts without perceiving that every disciple of that early age was in daily life, as well as in extreme conjunctures, expecting the fulfilment of his Master's promise—a promise which only a Divine Person could fulfil—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

3. There are Scripture proofs of another class which we think carry with them a peculiar charm and conclusiveness: we mean those passages in the Old Testament which are undoubtedly applied to the Most High, but which in the New Testament are as distinctly transferred to Jesus Christ. In the forty-fifth Psalm we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." But in the first chapter of Hebrews we are told that these words are spoken by the

[1] Heb. i. 2; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Phil. ii. 5-7; Col. ii. 9; Rom. ix. 5.

Father to the Son. In the sixth chapter of Isaiah we have a magnificent description of God's glory,—Jehovah sitting on "a throne high and lifted up," and "his train filling the temple," whilst seraphs veil their faces with their wings, and make the temple vibrate with their hymns of rapture. But in the Gospel of John we are told that the spectacle which was on this occasion vouchsafed to Isaiah was a vision of Christ's glory.

Amongst geographers there have sometimes been disputes as to the identity of a river. They have debated, for instance, whether the Quorra were the same as the Niger; but when a boat launched on the Niger, after a few weeks made its appearance floating on the Quorra, there was an end of the argument: the names might be two, but the streams were demonstrably the one the continuation of the other. And sometimes a critic, indignant at an anonymous author, has shown how much better a well-known writer would have handled the self-same subject—when it turns out that the nameless and the well-known personages are in this instance identical. In the 102d Psalm, eternity and unchangeableness are ascribed to the Great Creator; and there is no opponent of the Saviour's divinity who would not sing that psalm as a fitting ascription to the Most High God: when behold! the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us that it is a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ! To hail any creature, and say, "Holy, holy, Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of thy glory," we shall be told, by those who view Christ as a creature, is blasphemy. And yet when we push our inquiry up the stream of time, and go back to the period

to which John the Evangelist sends us—seven centuries before the advent—we find this identical anthem sung to Jesus Christ by no meaner worshippers than the heavenly seraphim![1]

Perhaps there is no doctrine on which the oracle has pronounced so plainly and so positively; and when to the direct and absolute deliverance of Scripture, you add all its incidental confirmations, the proof becomes not only irresistible, but almost redundant and oppressive. For instance, if Jesus be not a partaker of the Divine nature, how strange and unaccountable the solemnity which encircles His person whenever He is introduced in the Word of God! "How comes it to be such a crime to trample on His blood; and why is the man who loves Him not 'an anathema'? Wherefore is it represented as such a stretch of Divine munificence, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, if that Son were a mere man or a mere archangel? And when Howard and other men have impoverished themselves for their fellow-men, why should it be deemed such peerless generosity, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor; that ye, through his poverty, might be rich'? And if the mind of the Saviour were finite, how should it need a special prayer 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know

[1] Compare Ps. xlv. 6 with Heb. i. 8; Ps. cii. 25–27 with Heb. i. 10–14; Isa. vi. 1–4, 9, with John xii. 39–41.

the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge'?"[1] If Christ were a creature, how could He promise to numerous disciples, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world"? And how should He associate His name with the Name supreme in such a symbol as the baptismal dedication, "Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"?

Is there an attribute or an act of the Most High which is not ascribed to Jesus Christ? For example, does Jehovah claim eternal existence as His prerogative? "Thus saith Jehovah, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God." But in the Apocalypse Jesus says again and again, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Does Jehovah claim as a Divine distinction an all-pervading and all-perceiving presence? Does He promise to the Church of old Israel, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee"? And does He say, "The heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it? I Jehovah search the hearts; I try the reins"? But has not Jesus promised to the Christian Church, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" "Then shall all the churches know that I (Jesus) am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts"? Is creation the work of Omnipotence, and must "the gods who have not made the heavens perish from the earth"? But "all things were made by the Word, and without him was not anything

[1] Wardlaw on the Socinian Controversy, pp. 46–48.

made that was made." "By him," that is, by God's "dear Son," "were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

So thoroughly intermingled with the whole texture of New Testament Scripture is the Godhead of the Saviour, that no criticism which does not destroy the book can altogether extinguish its testimony. We have seen a copy of the Gospels and Epistles which was warranted free from all trace of the Trinity, but it was not the Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We beheld it, and we received instruction. It did not want beauty; for the Parables, and the Sermon on the Mount, and many a touching passage, still were there. But neither would a garden want beauty if the grass plats and green bushes still remained, though you had carefully culled out every blossoming flower. The humanity of Jesus still is beautiful, even when the Godhead is forgotten or denied. Or rather it looked like a coronation tapestry, with all the golden threads torn out; or an exquisite mosaic from which some unscrupulous finger had abstracted the gems and only left the common stones: you not only missed the glory of the whole, but in the fractures of the piece and the coarse plaster with which the gaps were supplied, you saw how rude was the process by which its jewels had been wrenched away. It was a casket without the pearl. It was a shrine without the Shekinah. And yet, after all, it was not sufficiently expurgated; for, after reading it, the thought would

recur, How much easier to fabricate a Gnostic Testament exempt from all trace of our Lord's humanity, than a Unitarian Testament ignoring His divinity!

Nor is the subject we have now been handling a barren speculation—a mere dogma in divinity. It lies at the very foundation of the sinner's hopes—it is full of strong consolation to those whose awakened consciences crave a mighty Redeemer. The demerit of sin is enormous. Considering the Majesty which sin insults and the law which sin violates, it is scarcely possible to exaggerate its turpitude, and it is impossible to see how a creature can exhaust its penalty. But Jesus is divine. The Surety is all-sufficient. The victim is God's own Son. "Christ with his own blood hath entered into the holy place, having obtained the eternal redemption for us." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." When we remember that God's servant was in this case God's Son, we can understand how by His obedience "God's righteous servant shall justify many." And when we recollect that He who poured forth His soul an offering for sin was the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary—when we remember that to all the sufferings of the Surety this value was given that they were the sufferings of innocence, this virtue was given that they were the sufferings of one who thought it no robbery to be equal with God—when we remember that on the cross of Calvary it was "God who did sacrifice to God," we can see at once how precious is the blood then shed, and how it cleanseth from all sin. No

wonder that in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. For His people Immanuel has gained the privilege of being their second Adam—their new and nobler head—restoring that life which their first father forfeited; and the safest existence in the universe is the life which is "hid with Christ in God."

Which leads us to remark, in conclusion, How secure are the friends of the Saviour! Our souls are lost, and were they this night saved and given back into our own keeping, we should soon lose them again. And were the best and holiest man we ever knew standing surety for their salvation, we should still have cause to tremble; for after the case of David and Peter, we see what dire disasters may befall the fairest and stateliest goodness of this world. Nay, were an angel from heaven undertaking to keep these souls, we might still have cause to hesitate; for there have been even angels who kept not their first estate, and how shall the kindest angel answer for my sin? But, reader, he who asks the keeping of your soul is Jesus, the Son of God—that Saviour who has at His command infinite merit to atone for its sin, and the might of omnipotence to guard it from danger—that Saviour who is one with the Father, and who can say, "To my sheep I give eternal life; neither can any pluck them out of my Father's hand." Ah, brother, an immortal soul is a pearl of great price, and that soul alone is safe whose Redeemer is mighty. But were it possible to take your soul in your hand, and transfer it as completely away to Him as you might open a casket and give away the gem, so that for years and ages you should see it no more, it were a wise and safe con-

signment. But how is it that Jesus does? The soul thus surrendered He takes, and puts His own royal mark upon it, and, though left in the casket of clay for a time, it is as safe as any jewel in His crown. But He does not forget it. He confides it to the care of that Heavenly Artist who polishes its rough surfaces and grinds away its disfiguring flaws; and by the pains taken with it—by the old things passing away and the new things appearing—the believer knows that Jesus has accepted this deposit, and will claim it in the day when He makes up His jewels. And when guilt upbraids him, or Satan sifts him, or the King of Terrors puts all his courage to the test, that joyful believer can exclaim, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

II.

APPEARANCES BEFORE THE ADVENT.

MOST of the time which Abraham spent in the Land of Promise, he sojourned at Mamre. With its airy uplands —its hill-sides sprinkled with olives, vines, and cherry-trees—its turf dappled with daisies and the star-of-Bethlehem—it was a charming retreat; and what made it still more delightful was a thicket of evergreen trees, under which he had formed his encampment. Here, in the heat of the day, Abraham would often sit at the entrance of his patriarchal pavilion; and as the bees murmured in the dark foliage overhead, and soft winds passed into the tent, it was pleasant to look through half-shut lids and espy the herdsmen and their flocks huddled together in the shadow of the distant copse; and amidst the sunshine, with its sleepy oppression, it was pleasant to close these lids and muse on the wonderful past till slumber succeeded, and life's morning in Ur, the appearance of the God of glory, and the more wonderful future, floated and flickered through the noon-day vision.

On one such occasion the patriarch received a remarkable visit. He observed three men approaching, and, with the impulse of the olden hospitality, he hasted forth

to meet them. As soon as he was near enough, in one of them he perceived something so pre-eminent and prince-like,—we could almost fancy something which so brought to mind the days of Ur and "the God of glory,"—that with a lowly prostration he exclaimed, "My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant;" and then, extending his welcome to all the three, he added, "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts." They accepted the invitation. They sat down in the leafy shade; and when Sarah's cakes, and the calf from the herd, with milk and butter, were placed on the board, they partook of the friendly cheer; and when they had ended their repast, and when the principal guest had rewarded the kindness of his host by announcing that the time at length was come, and that the son of promise should now be born, Sarah's incredulous laughter was rebuked by the significant challenge, "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?"

But if any doubt as to the heavenly character of the speaker remained, that doubt was speedily dispelled. When the meal was ended and the day was growing cool, the travellers resumed their journey. They set their faces eastward, and Abraham accompanied them. They soon reached an eminence from which they beheld a glorious prospect. Embosomed amongst the mountains stretched a little paradise. Fringed with palms, luxuriant with tropic verdure, and reflecting the purple cliffs from the tranquil bends of its glistening river, it almost looked as

if a fragment of old Eden had drifted down the stream and stranded among these silent hills; and as the spectator gazed on the mighty orchard, and heard the hum ascending from the smokeless villages, he might be pardoned if he envied the inhabitants of such a happy valley. But Abraham's companions looked grave, and as the two subordinates went down the steep, Abraham and the other were left alone. That other now stood forth in Deity confessed. He told Abraham that this lovely scene was about to become the theatre of a fearful visitation. "The place is fair, but the people are vile. Their sin is very grievous. As here we stand, there comes up the lowing of the herds, the carol of the evening bird; but that which reaches the ear of God is the cry of abominable iniquities —the loose jest, the ribald song, the voice of lust and violence. And although the landscape is beautiful, on account of its horrible inhabitants Heaven cannot look at it. It is time to pour over it the flaming annihilation, and blot it out of being." And Abraham's face grew pale. The doomed region contained those whom he dearly loved; and falling at the feet of the celestial speaker, he exclaimed, "Oh, let not the Lord be angry," and with an affable and yielding arbiter he urged his suit till he hoped that he had won a reprieve for the guilty cities. Then "THE LORD went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham."

No one can doubt that the patriarch's Visitor was a Divine Person; and any one who considers the entire facts of the case and the fitness of things, can have as little doubt that this Divine Person was He who afterwards said

of Himself, "Before Abraham was, I am," and who enunciated the great truth, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He it was who said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" and it was He who, when the two angels passed on and entered Sodom, remained alone with the patriarch, and confided to him the secret of the coming overthrow. It was He who, so exorable and so ready to pardon, gave in six times over to His servant's intercession, and said, "For the sake of ten righteous, I will not destroy it;" and who, when a fearful necessity inverted the vials of vengeance, "remembered Abraham," and rescued the kindred of His friend.

A century and a half passed on—a century and a half of those ample and deliberate days, when incidents were few and impressions lasted long. Abraham slept by Sarah's side in the cave of Machpelah, but God was mindful of His covenant, and in the sunny world outside the sepulchre He was making that covenant to grow. Isaac's son and Abraham's grandson was returning from a foreign sojourn, and was bringing with him eleven sons of his own, and a mighty retinue. And he was nearing the Promised Land, but still on the further side of Jordan. Word had reached him that an angry brother was on the way to meet him with an overwhelming company; and, after making the best arrangements to propitiate Esau, he was now left alone in darkness and in solitude. To-morrow would decide his destiny, and whilst others slumbered in the tents, Jacob, anxious and wakeful, wandered down to the sides of Jabbok, and cried in his extremity to the

God of Bethel. But instead of heaven opening, instead of some friendly sign from the excellent glory, the patriarch found himself suddenly assaulted. It might be Esau himself, or it might be some supernatural opponent; but it seemed as if a man were wrestling with him, bearing him backward, twisting, thrusting, and straining, and striving to hurl him to the ground. It was a strange, mysterious conflict, with no spectators except the stars, and in a silence only broken by the babbling of the brook; yet, silent and insuperable as he was, Jacob began to feel that his opponent was not an enemy. He was not an enemy, and yet he withstood the pilgrim's prayer; and though Jacob "wept and made supplication," as well as struggled in his earnest agony, he could not extort his request, till the day-spring closed the strife, and with a touch that left him lame for life, and with a blessing that made him illustrious to all eternity, the angel vanished. "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Jacob gave the place a new name, and God gave a new name to the patriarch. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed." The supplanter had come out in a new character, and earned a new title. By this valiant constancy as man with man, he had evinced himself a hero and a king of men; by this fervid importunity as a creature with his Creator, he had come out a prince of believers, a favourite with Heaven, the conqueror of condescending Omnipotence, a pattern of perseverance in prayer.

Two centuries and a half passed on—four hundred years since the flames of Sodom were quenched in the Dead Sea, and its ashes buried in that sullen sepulchre. The descendants of Abraham and Israel were now bondsmen in Egypt; and in the grim solitudes of Sinai, one of the proscribed race, a man who had been reared in a palace, but who was now reduced to do the work of a herdsman, was watching the flock, but was revolving higher themes, when he was suddenly startled by a strange phenomenon. A blaze of light drew his eyes in the direction of a certain shrub or tree, which for a moment he might have fancied had caught fire; but although with its brilliant pyramid it outshone the moon, he quickly noticed that it was not really burning. It was transfigured, and its leaves and branches shone as through a tent of flame; but instead of curling and crackling in the heat, it continued unconsumed, and from its excellent glory a voice hailed the astonished exile: "Draw not nigh, but put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Had this been all, Moses might have imagined that "the angel of the Lord" who appeared to him in the bush, and whose voice he now heard, was a mere ministering spirit, one of the many members of the heavenly host; but the speaker, "angel" as he was, went on to add, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, and from between the leafy cherubim and from within the flaming canopy the voice proceeded: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I have heard

their cry: and I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them unto a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." And when the timid Hebrew trembled at the task, when he shrank from the prospect of appearing before Pharaoh, in order to disarm his fears the speaker added, "Certainly I will be with thee." Accordingly, from the New Testament we gather that the Son of God, the Saviour, accompanied that exodus; that it was His voice which shook Mount Sinai; that it was He whom the murmurers tempted at Massah, when so many were destroyed of serpents; and that He was the spiritual rock of whom the believers among them drank as oft as they resorted to their Divine conductor and unfailing companion.[1]

The significance of these passages is considerably impaired, owing to a certain vagueness which attends the use of the word "angel." That word we are apt to associate with celestial beings, higher than ourselves, but inferior to the Creator. And doubtless the whole heavenly host are angels; but there is nothing to prevent a Divine Person, or a human person either, from acting as an angel. An "angel" means a "messenger" or "missionary," an "envoy," "one who is sent;" and just as early evangelists were angels or messengers of the Church, so the Son of God was the messenger or angel

[1] Heb. xii. 26; 1 Cor. x. 9, 4. The evidence on this subject is arranged with consummate ability and clearness in Principal Hill's *Lectures on Divinity*, book iii.

of the Father. And the only way to educe a consistent meaning from the passages now quoted, is to merge for a moment the ambiguous intermediate word, the "angel," and fix our regards on the two extremes—the "Man" and "the Mighty God"—in one word, Messiah, the Divine Missionary, the Messenger of the Covenant, God manifest in flesh, the Angel-Jehovah.

With this clue how readily all the dispensations run into one another, and how real is the identity of all believers! Yes, the Divine Friend, with whom Enoch walked, is the same as He who on the road to Emmaus made the heart of Cleopas and his comrade burn within them; and that Alpha and Omega of all his affections who well-nigh detached from the imprisoning rock and the encumbering clay the exile of Patmos, is the same Jesus who by another name talked with our sinless progenitors in the fragrant bowers of Paradise. He who said to Moses going up to a fierce tyrant, "Certainly I will be with thee," is the same Saviour, so sympathetic and so mighty, who said to apostles going out into a frowning world, "And lo! I am with you alway!" and He whom the eastern monarch saw walking in the midst of the burning pile with the three unscathed martyrs, is the same "Son of Man" whom through the opened heaven Stephen saw at the right hand of God, and to whom, with latest breath, he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Nay, that Almighty Friend who was the sole companion of the Hebrew Lawgiver's dying hour, and who took all the charge of Moses' funeral, is the same who said of Himself, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and

whose own lifeless form at last was laid in Joseph's sepulchre.

And do we err when we fancy a resemblance between these earlier visits and certain incidents which happened after the eventual Incarnation? Is there nothing in the burning bush which transports our thoughts to Tabor? and in the awful attraction which made Moses "draw near," and the overwhelming glory which next instant bore him to the dust, was there nothing akin to that consciousness of encircling heaven which made the spectators at once bury their faces and yet cry from the midst of their amazement, "Master, it is good to be here"? At the ford of Jabbok is there nothing which sends us away to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and, as a twin-picture to the father wrestling for all his family, exhibits a poor, weak woman importuning for her only child, till He who said to the one, "Thy name shall be called Israel, for as a prince thou hast prevailed with God," amazed at a faith such as He had found, "no, not in Israel," at length yielded to a tenacity which silence, and rebuffs, and seeming reluctance could not shake off, exclaiming, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt"? And in that God-like form which looked down so sadly on the doomed and lovely cities of the plain, and which, for the sake of a redeeming few, would so willingly have saved, is there no resemblance to One who, two thousand years thereafter, stood upon a neighbouring height, and, looking down on another doomed but lovely city, burst into tears, and cried, "If thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes."

The attire may alter, but the wearer does not change. The missionary may talk one language in England and another in India; but his mind is in either land the same. The attire, the mode of manifestation, the expressive actions, the style of language vary, as they fit into the several ages, from the primitive archaic time down to the days of the Gospel story: but throughout we can recognise ever reappearing the self-same Revealer of the Father, the self-same Prophet of the Church—that very Son of God who saved the first sinner, who saved the worst, and who seeks to save ourselves—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And, on the other hand, as far as the fundamental ideas are concerned, the Church of God on earth has all along been one. It has always been on the ground of an atonement, whether anticipated or accomplished, that the sinner has found pardon and acceptance. It has always been through the Mediator—through the Manifester of the Father and the Saviour of men—that the believer has held communion with God. And in this sense,—as sinners who pleaded the Great Sacrifice; as believers who communed with palpable and articulate Deity, who worshipped the Angel-Jehovah, who adored God manifest in the flesh,—all alike have been Christians. Malachi was a Christian, and Zechariah, and Isaiah. The sweet singer of Israel was a Christian, and there was no truer Christian in this sense than Moses himself. The father of the faithful was a Christian, and so was Noah, and so was Enoch, and so, we would fain hope, was the father of mankind—the first Adam himself.

III.

THE ADVENT.

AUGUSTUS was Emperor.

From the Atlantic to the Euphrates—from where the legions were arrested by the snows of Sarmatia northward, and the sands of Libya southward, the world was a Roman farm; and with all its lovely islands and fruitful shores, the Mediterranean was a Roman lake. Mauritania and Numidia, Egypt, Palestine, Syria—the countries now known as Turkey, Germany, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, Britain—all received their laws from the Italian capital, and all sent it their tribute. With its hundred and twenty millions of subjects, this region included the whole of the old world's intelligence, and nearly all its wealth; and though many of the conquered nations were fierce and strong, they had been effectually subdued, and were now overawed by an army of 300,000 men. With its beak of brass and its talons of steel the great eagle had grappled and overcome the human race, and the whole earth trembled when from his seven-hilled eyrie he flapped his wings of thunder.

There was nearly universal peace. By the courage and consummate generalship of Julius Cæsar, the most for-

midable nations had already been vanquished; and since the death of Pompey, and the conclusion of the civil war, the Empire, undivided and undisputed, was swayed by a single autocrat.

The pagan culture had culminated. The exquisite temples of Greece had begun to go to ruin, and in that land of sages there arose no new Pythagoras—no second Socrates. But the genius of Rome had scarcely passed the zenith. Seneca was born in the same year with John Baptist. Thousands still lived in whose ears the musical wisdom of Cicero lingered, and who had read, when newly published, the sublime speculations of Lucretius. It was but the other day that the sweet voice of Virgil had fallen mute, and only eight years since the tomb of Mæcenas had opened to admit the urn of Horace. Under its sumptuous ruler Rome was rapidly becoming a mountain-pile of marble palaces—baths, temples, theatres—the proudest on which sunbeams ever sparkled; and, with his enormous wealth and all-commanding absolutism, the Roman citizen was the lordliest mortal whom luxury ever pampered—the most supercilious demi-god who ever exacted the adulation of his fellows.[1]

Yet, amidst all this civilisation, it was a time of fearful depravity. In regions so remote as Britain and Germany

[1] It is worthy of remark, that the victory of Arminius, which gave the first ominous check to the world's conqueror, did not take place till A.D. 9. (See Creasy's *Decisive Battles*.) Of Roman wealth, some idea may be formed from the fact that in one triumph Julius Cæsar brought home to the public treasury twelve and a half millions sterling, and in four years the private fortune of Seneca the philosopher was augmented by more than two millions of our money. The reader of Horace and Juvenal will not need to be reminded of the vanity of the imperial Roman, nor of that gross flattery on which it subsisted.

it was scarcely surprising that dark superstitions should prevail, and that hecatombs of little children should be immolated by the fiends of the forest. But in Rome itself, under all the outward refinement, coarse tastes and fierce passions reigned; and the same patrician who at a false note in music would writhe with graceful agony, could preside imperturbable over the tortures of a slave or a prisoner: and to see him overnight shedding tears at one of Ovid's Epistles, you would not guess that he had all the morning been gloating on the convulsions of dying gladiators. Busts of Cato adorned the vestibule, but brutality and excess ran riot through the halls; and it was hard to say which was the most abandoned—the multitude who still adored divinities the patrons of every crime, or the scholars who laughed at superstition and perpetrated crimes worthy of a Mars or Jupiter.

This was the time which the Most High selected for the greatest event in human history. On the one hand, it was a time of tranquillity. The wars of long centuries had ceased. Men's minds were not absorbed in the contests of dynasties, nor agitated by the burning of their capitals and the desolation of their homes. And a lull like this was favourable for the commencement of a moral movement which concerned the whole of Adam's family. On the other hand, the world was old enough. For four thousand years the great experiment had been going on, and man had been permitted to do his best to retrieve the ruin of the Fall. It seemed, however, as if every struggle were only a deeper plunge; and betwixt the exploded nostrums of philosophy, and the corruption of the times, the world

was grown weary of itself. A dry rot had got into the ancient faith, and idolatry and hero-worship tottered on their crumbling pillars. Satiety or disgust was the prevailing mood of the wealthy; revenge and despair gnawed the heart of the down-trampled millions. For tribes which had lost their nationality, and for citizens who had sold their hereditary freedom, there was no spell in the past; and amongst a people who had lost faith in one another, there remained nothing which could inspire the fervour of patriotism. It was felt that if extrication ever came, it must come from above; and even in heathen lands, hints gathered from the Hebrew Scriptures, or prophetic particles floated down on the muddy tide of pagan mythology, began to be carefully collected and exhibited in settings of the richest poetry, till the bard of Mantua sang of a virgin, and an unprecedented offspring descended from high Heaven, who should efface the traces of our crimes, and free from its perpetual fears the world—in whose days the lion would be no terror to the ox, and the deadly serpent should die. Betwixt the general peace which prevailed, the hopeless wickedness, and the general wearying for a change, "the road was ready, and the path made straight." "The fulness of time was come, and GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON."

As the time was fulfilled, so the place was prepared. Two thousand years before, the Most High had marked off the land of Canaan, and had separated from the rest of mankind the family of Abraham, and, by a series of remarkable interpositions, had provided and preserved a cradle for the coming incarnation. For the first two thou-

sand years, the promise was public and promiscuous. The world's Redeemer might be born anywhere, and might spring from any family. There was nothing to prevent His advent at Ararat or Olympus—nothing to preclude His descent from Japheth or from Ham. The only thing certain was, that He was coming, and that he was to descend from Eve the mother of us all. But five centuries after the flood a restricting process began, and by a series of limitations the promise was rendered more and more precise. First of all, God chose a certain Chaldee family, and Abraham was pronounced the chosen progenitor of Messiah. Then a further restriction was made, and of Abraham's two sons the younger was taken. By and by the choice was still more narrowed, and of Isaac's twelve grandsons the dying Jacob predicted that in Judah's line must Shiloh come. And in this latitude the promise continued for many centuries, till to one of Judah's descendants it was revealed that amongst his posterity should be that mighty Prince, "whose name shall endure for ever, and whom all nations shall call blessed." The same exhaustive process which at last left David's family the favoured and eventful line, made Palestine, then Judah, and finally the little town of Bethlehem, the predestined and distinguished locality. So that when Malachi laid down the pen, and for the four centuries following, during which heaven opened no more, and the voice of inspiration was hushed, the decree was gone forth, and both the place and the pedigree were conclusively fixed. Not of Greek or Trojan ancestry, not in the hoary line of the Seleucidæ nor in the haughty house of Cæsar, but beyond

all dispute, and all rivalry aside, in the lineage of David would Messiah appear; and neither Memphis nor Babylon, neither Athens nor Rome, no, nor even the holy city, no, not even Jerusalem, but of all places in the world, though so little among the thousands of Judah, should Bethlehem-Ephratah be the spot for ever eminent, "out of which should that Ruler appear, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Over the family and the region thus selected a special Providence watched, and the world's history supplies no parallel to the fortunes of the peculiar people who were to be Messiah's progenitors. All along and divinely predestined as the receptacle of incarnate Deity, the land was in the occupancy of gigantic idolaters when Jehovah presented it to Abraham; but if the Canaanites could have entertained any fear of the old and childless pilgrim, their fears must have vanished when they saw his great-grandsons saddle their asses and creep away down into Egypt, a hungry and poverty-stricken company. Ages passed on, and in all the promised land there were no tidings of its preposterous claimants, except that they were now the thralls of Pharaoh, and never likely to quit the brick-fields and burning kilns of On. But at last a rumour ran that the slaves had escaped; and if they ever got disentangled from the Arabian desert, they might possibly revisit their ancient seats, and renew their ancestral claim. But to the tall Anakim, to the Jebusites perched aloft on their rocky fortresses, and to the Canaanites scouring the plain in their chariots of iron, there was only a theme of derision in the approach of the motley

multitude. At last, however, with its mysterious precursor—with its cloudy ensign moving before—that multitude began to darken the eastern bank of the Jordan, and the men of Jericho could see them, phalanx by phalanx, condensing just over against their city. But deep and wild the river ran between, and the wanderers had neither boat nor pontoon : and high and strong the ramparts rose, and the wanderers had neither scaling-ladder nor battering-ram. Yet on, still on, the strangers pressed; and oh, wonderful ! the river started back, and curbed its waters till the whole had passed. On, still on, the strangers strode, and round and round the rocky citadel they stalked in mystic marches, till a harsh and horrid blare had seven times sounded, and, like a mud-hovel in the jaws of an earthquake, the castle walls crashed in and poured their dusty ruin far and near. On, still on, that invading billow spread and poured—a charmed host unused to soldiership, and with scarce a sword among them; and from the frown of their guiding Pillar, and from the flash of their oracular Urim, the embattled squadrons of Philistia melted and disappeared, till from Judah's milky pastures, all across Jezreel's golden granary, on to the wine-purpled skirts of Lebanon and the honey-dropping cliffs of Carmel, the land swarmed with the chosen race, and fulfilled Heaven's oath to faithful Abraham.

Nor less surprising was that Providence which hermetically sealed the favoured region, and which, segregating from all the peoples of the earth the people of Israel, and infusing its distinctive element into the national mind, kept Hebrew nature from ever again mingling and getting

merged in the common human nature. How wonderful the wisdom which, like naphtha in a fountain or like amber in the sea, ever floating, never melting, amidst every dispersion, in Egypt and in Babylon, kept the race distinct! How determinate the counsel and foreknowledge of God which fixed on the all-important portion of the Hebrew family, and, letting go as of no account ten tribes, protected and preserved the wonder-freighted Judah! How evident the mind of God in that home-instinct which, when other deported tribes settled down in inglorious quiescence—like those sea-creatures which, riven from the rock, still cling to it with their long tentacula, gave Judah feelers long enough to stretch across seventy years of exile, and which, beside the waters of Babylon, still kept him clasped to Jerusalem, and painfully quivering till once he returned; and how all-seeing that Eye, which, amidst the few thousands of rescued captives, made sure of Zerubbabel, and amidst the ransomed who returned to Zion saw safely on his way David's descendant and Mary's grandsire! And oh, how wonderful that counsel and excellent that working which brought about the fulness of the time—which deferred the advent till the world was at its worst, and the race to be redeemed was in its sorest need—and which yet, in a general peace, secured an audience and an entrance for the forthcoming Gospel, and which in universal empire, in the great arterial roads and ubiquitous presence of the Roman conqueror, prepared for its glad tidings the swiftest transmission; which, planting Messiah's cradle on the summit of the hollowed mine, took care that He should be born before that mighty

explosion burst which was to tear in shreds each Hebrew pedigree, and leave not a Jew within fifty miles of Bethlehem; and as soon as that advent was over came the blaze of the great catastrophe, dispersing the Jewish people over all the world, confusing all their families, consuming all their genealogies, and making it utterly impossible that another Son of David should be born in David's town!

The prophetic and providential preparation being thus complete, "The Word was made flesh."

> "It was in the time of great Augustus' tax,
> And then He comes
> That pays all sums,
> Even the whole price of lost humanity,
> And sets us free
> From the ungodly empery
> Of sin, and Satan, and of death."[1]

With God there is no forgetfulness. With Him there is nothing formidable. With Him a thousand years are as one day.

It was exactly a thousand years since a promise had been made to David, that a son of his should possess universal sovereignty. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him, and shall call him blessed. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." And it looked almost possible that this promise might be fulfilled in the sumptuous Solomon. His dominions were vast, his reign was pacific; and whilst

[1] Jeremy Taylor.

with the omnipotence of wealth he had piled up on the heights of Zion whole quarries of marble and forests of cedar, he had filled the world with the fame of his wisdom.

But neither Solomon nor Solomon's son fulfilled the prophecy; and ever since that day the Hebrew monarchy had been dwindling more and more, till now the sceptre of Judah had grown a truncheon, short and shabby, and was wielded by a usurper's foul and servile hand.

Meanwhile, the descendants of David—where were they? You see this grassy dingle, rimmed round with its fifteen hills, and a village on the slope of one of them—a beautiful spot, abounding in birds and flowers, corn-fields and gardens, and with a fine fresh air often stirring the oaks and the mulberries, and sweeping a powdery cloud up the dusty streets. That village is Nazareth—a charming seclusion, but its inhabitants are not a gainly people. They are coarse, lawless, uncivil, and with their broad patois and sulky independence, they are no favourites with their neighbours. But among them is at least one good man, a widower of the name of Joseph. All through the week he labours diligently in that shed of his, with James and his other sons around him, making ploughs for the farmers, bowls and kneading-troughs for the matrons, spears and arrows for the hunters. But on the afternoon of the sixth day the finished implements are sent home, and the scene of industry is swept and garnished. The saw and the hammer are hung from the rafters, and, fragrant with cedar-dust and chips of pine, the shop is left to silence and solitude, whilst, released from his toils, the weary artisan enters his cottage to

light the Sabbath-lamp, and then ascends the brow of the hill where stands the synagogue. To that same synagogue repairs the carpenter's youthful kinswoman and affianced bride. Meek, single-hearted, devout, she listens reverently whilst the Law and the Prophets are read, and as the songs of Zion are chanted to David's own tunes, her soul ascends on the wings of psalmody. That lily among thorns, that maid of Nazareth, and that toil-worn craftsman, Joseph the carpenter, are the descendants of the imperial Solomon, the representatives of the old Hebrew royalty.

Five hundred years before this, a Hebrew prophet lay on the banks of a Babylonian river in an agony of patriotism and prayer, and the burden of each petition was the return of the captivity and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. At the close of the intercession a celestial courier appeared, and told him more than he had asked to know. Not only did he foretell the building of Jerusalem, but he announced matters far more momentous. He told the time of Christ's coming, and how, "after seventy weeks," reconciliation should be made for iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness should be brought in, causing sacrifice and oblation to cease.

And now that the period had arrived, and this great promise was about to be fulfilled, the same heavenly envoy was despatched to the scene of the evolving mystery. Desirous to look into these things, angels watched his flight. But it was on no lordly mansion that Gabriel descended. Not even in that Holy Land did Tiberias, with its shadowy bowers and rosy terraces, attract his

feet; nor Cesarea, with its princely villas, laved by luxurious seas; nor Jerusalem, with its ancient palaces; and what seemed stranger still, not even David's city, the favoured and predicted Bethlehem. But speeding straight towards this outlandish upland village, out of which no good thing had ever come, and which had never once been named in the whole Old Testament story, he discharged his great commission, and announced to the meek and lowly virgin that of all Abraham's daughters it was herself who was destined to be the mother of Messiah. She should have a son, JESUS by name, and "he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Tidings of great joy, when shut up in our feeble minds, grow terrible. The distinction which had come to Mary was one that had for ages lent a dignity and sacredness to the entire Hebrew sisterhood; and now that Mary found it concentrated in herself, the realization was overwhelming, and the promise which faith did not stagger to receive, it seemed as if reason must stumble to carry. There was no one in that Nasareth to whom she could impart the amazing announcement, and therefore it was a relief to remember that the angel had mentioned her own cousin Elisabeth as the subject of a like interposition; and far away as was the hill country of Judah, Mary made up her mind to the journey, and resolved to seek out her venerable relatives in their highland home.

A certain parity of years is usually essential to frank

communion, and to the sympathy which springs from a thorough mutual understanding. But when the heart is sore troubled, we are apt to look a little upward. We want something superior to ourselves to which to cling—something older, wiser, or better. Had it been any ordinary news or any worldly project, it would have been natural to talk it over to some village companion. But an event so sacred and solemn—an event which had suddenly linked Mary's humble history to the whole of human destiny, and which, if "highly favoured," had also made her feel herself fearfully distinguished—such an event she had no heart to confide to any Nazarene neighbour. But in that distant parsonage there dwelt a godly pair—kind, considerate, strong in the sagacity of the single eye, and bright with the benevolence of an alluring piety. Perhaps Elisabeth might be able to throw some light on the angel's message; at all events, Mary would find soothing and support in that calm and prayerful dwelling.

How she journeyed we do not know; but as she neared the house of Zacharias, many thoughts would arise in her mind. Now would be decided whether what the angel had told about her cousin Elisabeth were true, or whether the whole were not a strange delusion—a wild waking vision. But how astonished they would be to see her! and how was she to explain her errand? As she neared the spot difficulties started up which she had not thought of in her impetuous outset, and the house of the Levite looked more formidable at the journey's end than when viewed from the cottage in Nazareth. There was no one

stirring out of doors, and no one noticed her approach She ventured in, and so softly did she steal into the quiet chamber that its only occupant, a matron advanced in years, did not observe her entrance. "Cousin Elisabeth, all hail!" trembled from a gentle child-like voice, and instantly springing up and turning round, with a look such as Mary had never seen in her kinswoman before—such a look of awe and ecstasy—the older exclaimed to the younger, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Son thou shalt bear! And how is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Reassured by a salutation so akin to the antecedent miracle, the soul of Mary rushed forth in the rapid and tuneful inspiration of that "Magnificat" which is repeated in the audience of millions day by day:—

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
And holy is his name;
And his mercy is on them that fear him,
From generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen his servant Israel,
In remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers,
To Abraham,
And to his seed for ever."

IV.

BETHLEHEM, AND THE FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

MARY remained in the hill-country of Judea three months, and it was doubtless a profitable season which she spent in that peaceful seclusion. True, the venerable Levite was dumb. As a reproof for his incredulity he had been domoed to a temporary silence; but in the dwellings of the righteous there is an atmosphere of re-assuring tranquillity even when the voice of rejoicing is hushed, and when familiar footfalls are heard no longer. Perhaps, too, Zacharias prayed the more when cut off from wonted converse; and the circumstances attending his bereavement added another sign to the many wonders of this eventful season: whilst the soul of her youthful visitor imbibed new faith from the cheerful converse and experienced piety of the "blameless" Elisabeth.

Returning to Nazareth, and, in consequence of a Divine admonition, recognised by Joseph as his affianced bride, "the handmaid of the Lord" was soon called to undertake another pilgrimage. An ancient prophecy, possibly overlooked or obscurely known by Mary, had fixed on Bethlehem in Judah as the birthplace of Messiah. But to that town Mary had no errand; when, in the determi-

nate counsel and foreknowledge of God an incident fell out which sent her thither. It occurred to Cæsar Augustus to take up a census of Palestine; and in order that the enumeration might be systematically conducted, all the inhabitants were ordered to rendezvous at the head-quarters of their respective families; and, as descendants of the royal family, Joseph and his wife set out for David's city.

Bethlehem was a long village, straggling on the ridge of a grey limestone hill, a few miles south from Jerusalem. Its inhabitants prided themselves on their great fellow-citizen, who had founded the Hebrew monarchy. They could show the stranger the fields where he had herded his sheep—where he had practised his sling on the kites and the eagles—where he had fought the bear and the lion. They could show the well at the gate which he had drunk of so often, and the field to which his grandmother came a timid young gleaner; and from the airy crest of the town they could point out the purple heights far away where Ruth spent her childhood—the mysterious strange-languaged mountains of Moab.

That evening when Joseph and Mary arrived, Bethlehem looked beautiful: for we have reason to believe that it was the sweet season of spring. It was pleasant to get away from the bustle and crowd of Jerusalem—out to the open air—out to the freshness of the country. It was pleasant to tread among daisies, anemones, and stars of Bethlehem; and very sweet was the breath of the budding vine, very sweet was the odour crushed from the herbage by the tread of the pilgrims. It was pleasant to hear from yonder fig-

tree shade the voice of the turtle, and more pleasant still the merry shouts of boys and girls playing in the hamlets as they passed—and most pleasant of all was the voice of mutual endearment with which the travellers beguiled the last stage of their journey.

And now, as they reached the village entrance, and went in through the sounding gateway, the loungers gazed at the North-country carpenter and his beautiful wife; but little did any one guess that in the arrival of these lowly visitors a prophecy was fulfilled, and Bethlehem ennobled beyond all the thousands of Judah. There was an unusual bustle in the streets. The same decree which had brought one party from Nazareth had summoned many families from other corners of the Holy Land. The village overflowed; and as when people come together, released from wonted avocations and doomed to necessary idleness, there was much wandering to and fro—much talk and buzz—perhaps some foolish merriment. Eagerly did the Galilean strangers seek the inn. It was impossible. There was no room. Others had been refused already. Nor was there any private house or friendly lodging that would take them in; and weak and weary as she was, Joseph was thankful when he found for his partner a resting-place in the stable.

The night soon gathered. The shouts of the revellers fell silent in the khan, and stillness enfolded Bethlehem. It was that soft season when Eastern shepherds lodge in the fields all night, and a party of these humble peasants kept their bivouac on the adjacent hills. They were David's hills, and as they sat around their watch-fire, and listened

to the wolf's "long howl" from yon dark valley, perhaps they sang, "The Lord's my shepherd:"—

> "Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
> Yet will I fear none ill:
> For thou art with me; and thy rod
> And staff me comfort still!"

As the mild stars glittered, and among them that strange new one which had lately lit up their firmament; as the thyme gave out its fragrance to the dew, and nothing stirred except where some wakeful lamb was nibbling the cool grass, most likely the weary men were sleeping. But something brilliant burst into their slumber, and, starting up, they found a mysterious daylight round them, and a shining form before them. They were terrified, for they knew that it was an angel. But he said, "Fear not: for I bring you good tidings:—

> "To you, in David's town, this day
> Is born, of David's line,
> The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
> And this shall be the sign:
> The heav'nly Babe you there shall find
> To human view display'd,
> All meanly wrapt in swaddling-bands,
> And in a manger laid."

Hardly had the angel ceased, when the sky brightened with sudden splendour, and melted into music:—

> "Glory to God in the highest,
> On earth peace,
> Good-will toward men."

Oh, it was exquisite that burst of seraphic melody! and as it lapped the listeners round and round, it seemed to sever from all sin: it brought God so near, and filled the

spirit with such peace, that the soul could easily have been beguiled out of the body—and as its liquid whisper brought them back and laid them on the earth again, they held their breath in hope that the chorus might burst again. But the guard of honour was going home. The light, the music gathered up itself, and as the pearly portals closed, the air fell dark and dead.

Yes, the angels were gone home again to heaven. But the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." Entering the village, and hastening towards the khan, they saw a lamp burning in the stable, and entering in, there assuredly was the new-born babe, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger. And that is Christ the Lord! That infant is the Saviour! Heaven's gift and earth's benediction! Oh, what a waking will evolve from the soft slumber! Glory to God and peace to the world are calmly sleeping in that cradle!

They told Joseph and Mary what it was that brought them; and as they described the angel's visit, and the aërial orchestra, and repeated all that they had heard, a holy gladness filled the mind of the virgin mother, and the joy of the Lord was strength to her. The shepherds, too, forgetful of all that must happen before that infant could be a man, but feeling as if it were all fulfilled already, went their way, praising God; and for long they trod their hills with recollected step, as favoured men should tread on holy ground; and in the night would sometimes awake and listen, fancying that angelic harps had floated by.

Eight days passed on, and, with the old Hebrew rite, the babe was named. How He should be called, there was no dispute; for the angel had fixed His name beforehand. And so His name was called JESUS.

A month passed on, and according to another appointed usage, His parents went up to Jerusalem. On this auspicious occasion, had they been rich, they would have taken a lamb and a dove as their offering; and had it been a royal churching, there would have swept into the temple courts a splendid cortége, rustling in silks, and blazing with jewels, and the highest functionaries of the temple would have awaited in gorgeous attire the princely procession. But when a poor woman entered, with a babe on one arm, and a little basket with two young pigeons on the other, the whole thing was so common, that the officials were glad to hurry through the ceremony as fast as possible: and although the Lord, whom they pretended to seek, was "suddenly come to His temple," His arrival would have arrested no notice, if it had not been for the keener susceptibility of two veteran devotees. To one of these, Simeon, it had been specially revealed, that he should not die till he had seen the Messiah; and just as Joseph and Mary were slowly ascending the steps of Moriah, the Holy Spirit revealed to him, "He is come! He is come!" If, for a moment, Simeon expected an imperial presence—a crowned head, and a sceptred hand —his agile faith was not taken aback, and he betrayed no disappointment at the lowly babe: but instantly clasping Him in his arms, he cried,—

> "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
> According to thy word:
> For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
> Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
> A light to lighten the Gentiles,
> And the glory of thy people Israel."

And as the parents marvelled at the old man's rapture, and as he handed back to Mary the heavenly child, he added, "This child is set for the fall, and for the restoration of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed; yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." And whilst he spoke, the group was joined by an ancient prophetess, a well-known frequenter of the temple precincts, where she lingered all day, and near which she lodged by night. Anna came up, and, sharing Simeon's expectant spirit, she also shared in Simeon's ecstasy. "Coming in that instant, she likewise gave thanks to the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

The words of Simeon, including his hymn of praise, and his address to the mother of our Lord, derive a charm not only from their piety and the peculiar circumstances in which they were uttered, but they are striking as the last of the Messianic prophecies. In this final and concentrated prediction, we have in brief compass a sketch of Christ's character and office, and are foretold the fortunes of His gospel in the world. Like the large-hearted and far-stretching seers of old, but quite unlike the "rude mass" of his modern compatriots,[1] Simeon exults in the

[1] Olshausen.

catholicity and comprehensiveness of the great salvation. Perhaps with Isaiah's cadence in his ear, "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,"[1] he describes this great salvation as "prepared before the face of all people;" and whilst as a patriot he celebrates "the glory of Israel," as a prophet he hails "the Light of the Gentiles." Yes, it is not Abraham, nor David; it is not Moses, nor Solomon; but it is Jesus who is to be the glory of Israel; and other nations may boast of having yielded sages and saints, but it is Israel's boast to have yielded to the world its Saviour. To the world, for Israel's glory is the Light of the Gentiles. When the Egyptian princess gazed on the bulrush ark, she did not think that the babe there weeping was to be a mightier man than any Pharaoh of them all, and should leave a name to outlast the Pyramids. But when Simeon gazed on the virgin's child, he knew its mighty destinies, and his heart beat thick to think how soon from these swaddling-bands would unfold, not Israel's second Lawgiver, but the Light-giver to mankind. Yes, this spark of immortality, this soft and cloud-like innocence, is yet to flame forth the Sun of Righteousness, and, all unlike the giant of the firmament, who can only lighten a single hemisphere with his world-embracing beams, Jesus shall lighten every land; and although exhalations from the abyss may for a season intercept His beams, whatever spot admits them—Waldensian valley or Bohemian forest,

[1] Isaiah xxv. 6.

Lapland hut or English palace, that spot, deriving light direct from heaven, will be a Goshen amid surrounding gloom.

Peculiar privileges are accorded to eminent piety. It is possible that Simeon and Anna may not have been altogether alike; but they were both of them remarkably good. The one was "just and devout;" a man of uprightness and probity, as well as of religious profession; an old cedar, sound at the core, and with his branches green; by the godly loved for his heavenly-mindedness, and by all men revered for his virtues. And Anna—there was one thing which she desired of the Lord, and sought after, that she might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of her life, to behold His beauty, and to inquire in His temple. Since her own dwelling had darkened, and she left, mayhap on Asher's sounding shore, the husband of her youth, she had sought no other home than God's own house. Her Maker was her husband, and she knew no dearer joy than to serve Him with prayers and fastings night and day. At early dawn, when the crimson east was reflected from the temple-gates, and before the silver trumpets had sent their warbling summons to royalty asleep in yonder palace, and to the population dreaming on yon smokeless house-tops, Anna often was waiting and ready to enter as soon as the guards had flung open the ponderous doors. And at night, when the Levites had refreshed with new fuel the golden altar, and the lamps burned clear in the holy shrine; when the outer court was hushed—for traders

and worshippers were mostly gone—and lights began to flicker from the cloister windows, with nothing to lure her back to mortal dwellings, and with God himself, her sun and shield, to retain her where she was, Anna was among the last to withdraw. But in whatever they resembled or differed, Simeon and Anna were alike in their piety. They were both of them loyal to the God of their fathers. They were both of them saintly survivors of the simple faith of an earlier time. And they were both of them expectant believers, who had Christ in their hearts long before they found Him in their arms. They looked for redemption; they longed for the consolation of Israel. And He who gives grace for grace surprised His servants with a rare and remarkable blessing. For one thing, he endowed them with the spirit of prophecy. Since Malachi, inspiration had vanished from the Holy Land; and it was at once a sign of the Advent, and a distinction conferred on these two eminent worshippers, that in them, amongst the first, the silence broke, and the lost gift was revived. Anna the prophetess was the successor of Miriam and Deborah; and Simeon summed up that long series of Messianic prophecies to which David and Isaiah had been the largest contributors. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And it was in virtue of this prophetic power that they were enabled to detect their own felicity; for the same Holy Spirit who awakened in them the longing for Christ's day, told them when Christ was come. By making them pure in heart, He fitted them for seeing God; and by making them prophets, He assured them that it was God whom now they saw. The Angel of the

Covenant was paying His first visit to the temple, but the numerous danglers at its gates saw nothing but an infant carried in. The worshippers in the courts knelt, and kept repeating, "Speedily, speedily; Lord, come to thy temple speedily;" and little dreamed that the answer to their prayer was actually arrived. The hirelings at the altar saw a poor couple approach, and contemptuously eyed the scanty offer. And even the priest presiding little surmised his high prerogative; he little thought that his mitred predecessor, who at that same altar had awaited the Queen of Solomon, was less distinguished, and that, in days to come, no prelate at an emperor's christening would receive into his arms so august an infancy. But what was hid from worldly sagacity, and from sacerdotal formalism; what was hid from the wise and prudent, was revealed to the meek faith and penetrating eye of these Heaven-taught worthies; and however long or short they tarried after this, Simeon and Anna trod the streets of Jerusalem with a consciousness which its proudest citizen might envy. They had seen the great salvation. They had seen the Christ of God. They had received into their hands, and pressed to their adoring bosoms the promised seed, the woman's Son, the Man Jehovah. To them it was no longer faith, but sight. Their new economy had dawned: their New Testament existence was begun. They had found their Gospel in yonder temple, and whenever they departed from this world they would leave Immanuel in it.

This incident also shows us that before leaving the world, God's people are made willing to go. Up to that moment, Simeon would have been loath to depart; but the

instant he saw this great salvation, he was in haste to be gone. Sometimes, in pacing the shore of that great ocean which you are soon to cross, solemn thoughts have arisen: "Why this clinging to mortality? Why this love of life, this fear of dying? Can I belong to Christ, and yet so deprecate departing to be with Him?" But if you are really His, He will arrange it all most excellently. The wicked may be driven away in their sins, or they may be dragged to a dreaded tribunal; but the believer will tarry till he can say, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." And this the Lord usually effects by loosening that chain which held him to this life, or by presenting such a strong attraction that the chain is broken unawares. The summer before good old Professor Wodrow died, "Principal Stirling's lady came in to see him," as his son, the historian, tells us; "and he said to her, 'Mrs. Stirling, do you know the place in the new kirkyard that is to be my grave?' She answered she did. 'Then,' says he, 'the day is good, and I'll go through the Principal's garden into it, and take a look of it.' Accordingly they went, and when they came to the place, as near as she could guess, she pointed it out to him, next to Principal Dunlop and her own son and only child. He looked at it, and lay down upon the grass, and stretched himself most cheerfully on the place, and said, 'Oh, how satisfying it would be to me to lay down this carcass of mine in this place, and be delivered from my prison; but it will come in the Lord's time.'"[1] But

[1] Life of James Wodrow, A.M., Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow, p. 180.

although for more than forty years this cheerful Christian had never one day doubted his heavenly Father's love, it was not till his own dear children had gone before, and till manifold infirmities made the flesh a burden, that he felt thus eager to put off the tabernacle. That was the weaning process. Nevertheless, the Lord has other ways. Were you prematurely rending the calyx which contains the coming rose or lily, perhaps it would refuse to blow at all, or at best you would only get a crumpled stunted flower. God's way is better. With gushing summer He fills the bud within; with sap and strength He makes it glad at heart, till the withering cerement bursts, and the ripened fragrance floats through all the air of June. The soul must be ripe within, and then it easily puts off this tabernacle. And nothing matures it faster for that immortal expansion than an abundant joy. And just as, after a continuance of cold and gloomy days, you have seen one balmy sun-burst let loose whole fleets of waiting blossoms—so a single bright incident, one smile from Jehovah's countenance, will be the propitious moment when the soul would gladly quit the body of sin, and breathe the better air for ever. From the hour he was shown that gory vesture, and realized his Joseph torn to pieces, Jacob had nothing to desire in life, and knew no attraction greater than the grave. And yet he had not heart to die. It was not till that amazing hour when he found weeping on his neck the child so long lamented, and saw, in stalwart strength and regal grandeur, the very form which he had so often pictured in the lion's crunching jaws, that Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me

die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." "I am happy. I have nothing more to wish. This gladness gives me strength to go." And so with many of God's servants. Like Simeon—though perhaps without Simeon's promise—they are waiting for something. They could die happy if they were only more assured of their interest in Christ, or if they only saw the good work begun in some soul very dear to them. They would gladly depart if they might first witness some great salvation—if they might only behold the destruction of Antichrist, or the triumph of the Gospel in the world. Perhaps in His great indulgence the Lord grants the very blessing; but at all events He knows how to put such gladness in the heart that glory shall surround the soul before it has leisure to surmise that the body is dissolved.

Of all these antidotes to death, there is none like Jesus in the arms. Of all those attractions which charm the spirit into everlasting life, there is none like the desire to depart and be with Christ. That we may understand it, let us pray for the Holy Spirit, who made Simeon's eye so perspicacious, and Simeon's heart so warm. Let us seek to see in Jesus what Simeon saw, and then we, too, may feel what Simeon felt.

Is Jesus our salvation? God has prepared a feast of fat things before the face of all people;—have we found satisfaction in the heavenly provision? or, like the rich ones of earth—the self-righteous, the voluptuous, and the rationalists—are we passing empty away? In the atonement wrought out by God's dear Son, do our faint and sin-hurt souls welcome a cordial like reviving wine; and have the

Saviour's words of grace come to our spirits like cold water in the desert to a thirsty soul? Have we ever felt the hunger after righteousness? and, listening to Christ's holy words, have we ever perceived in them a Divine deliciousness? and feeling as if our souls began to live by them, have we been ready to exclaim, "Lord, evermore give us this bread"? Are we satisfied with the Lord's Christ, and with his sin-cleansing, soul-renovating salvation? We are Gentiles: Is Jesus our "light"? Is Jesus our Sun? Has He shone upon our path, and do we now see the way to immortality? Has He revealed to us the Father, and we who once sat in darkness, do we now see God as holy, yet forgiving; as righteous, and yet reconciled? Is Jesus our Loadstar? Do we love Him? Do we eye Him? On the deep, do we steer by Him? In the desert, do we direct our steps by Him? Are His wishes law to us? Is His pattern our incentive? His "Well done" our ample recompense? And has Jesus made us luminous? Are we radiant with grace and truth received from His fulness? Does His spirit shine in us? Do those that know our meekness, and charity, and zeal, and courage, take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus?

The last sand from Time's hour-glass
  Shall soon disappear;
And like vapour shall vanish
  This old-rolling sphere.

Off the floor, like the chaff-stream
  In the dark windy day,
From the fan of destruction
  Shall suns drift away;

And the meteors of glory
  Which 'wilder the wise,
Only gleam till we open
  In true worlds our eyes.

But aloft in God's heaven
  There blazes a Star,
And I live whilst I 'm watching
  Its light from afar.

From its lustre immortal
  My soul caught the spark,
Which shall beam on undying
  When the sunshine is dark.

So transforming its radiance,
  In strength so benign,
The dull clay burns a ruby
  And man grows divine.

To the zenith ascended
  From Joseph's dark tomb,
Star of Jesse ! so rivet
  My gaze 'midst the gloom ;

That thy beauty imbibing
  My dross may refine,
And in splendour reflected
  I burn and I shine.

V.

THE WILDERNESS.

BEAUTIFUL were the bowers where man woke up to existence, and nothing could be lovelier than the scene destined to prove the decisive battle-field of human history. The representatives of our race had great advantages. They were strong in spirit. To one another they were bound by fondest affection, and their Creator was their companion and friend. They had not the least cloud on their conscience, nor the slightest infirmity in their frame. They were healthy, and holy, and happy. The stake was immense, and the interests involved were enormous. The stake was two worlds, and the depending interests were a hundred generations. But though all was so favourable; though every motive was so urgent, and the means of resistance so great, no defeat could be more dire and disastrous. Heaven was forfeited, and earth was enslaved. The vanquished combatants became the prey of the victor, and all their descendants were thenceforward the captives of Satan, given over to the bondage of corruption.—An overthrow which was mainly owing to the tremendous power of the adversary. Originally one of the mightiest of created beings, he had fallen from his

high estate, and, retaining most of his strength and intelligence, he had become the enemy of God and all goodness. For the ends of Infinite Wisdom, along with his associate angels, allowed a temporary range, he was devoting the interval to the perpetration of all the evil which malice could suggest or craft could carry through; and in the progenitors of a new and noble family he found a target on which he resolved to spare no arrows—a specimen of the Creator's handiwork, which he hoped and vowed to demolish. His plans were skilfully laid; and, partly by a cunning ambush, and partly by a stroke of astounding audacity, he conquered, first the one and then the other; and, as he retreated from the scene, a momentary exultation swelled his fiendish breast; for snakes were hissing and beasts of prey were roaring; there was poison in the streams, and sulphur in the air; there was mildew on the flowers, and a creeping death through all the garden; whilst—rarest joy to his devil's heart!—the joint-partners of Paradise were upbraiding one another, and as, in anger, and shame, and terror, they skulked into the shade, those to whom their Maker had so lately been their chiefest joy, were wishing that there were no God at all.

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." To spoil the spoiler, to destroy destruction, and to lead captive captivity, was His godlike enterprise; and we are now come to the first of those conflicts which are to end in overturning the empire of Apollyon. Adam was a champion, and so was Christ. Each represented a race. Adam

represented mankind; Christ represented His Church, or humanity redeemed. And just as in the old heroic times, it was not unusual for the leaders of opposing hosts to challenge one another, and fight out the quarrel in single combat, whilst either army looked on; so now, in the history of redemption, we are arrived at another of these single-handed encounters, which makes the opening of the Gospels as solemn and eventful as the outset of the Bible.

No sooner was Jesus baptized than the Spirit bore Him away to the desert, and on very purpose that He should engage in this combat. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." For this the time was the fittest, when He was newly designated to His high office, and before He had entered on its manifold engagements; and, we may add, no time of spiritual preparation could be fitter, than when the voice of complacent Deity still lingered in His ear, and His soul was still rejoicing in that oil of gladness with which He had been anointed above all His fellows.

Wherever the desert was, it must have been a very lonely place; for Mark tells us, "He was with the wild beasts." What a contrast to the lot of the first Adam does this single coincidence suggest! Here are the wild beasts, and here is one in God's own image—and these dumb creatures know Him. It is the lion's den and the mountain of leopards, but night by night the pilgrim lays Him down and takes His quiet sleep fearing no evil: and in the day-time, assured by His mild aspect, the conies of the cliff gambol at His feet, and the rock-pigeon circles in fond gyrations round that attractive gentleness on whom

the celestial dove so lately rested. But except this homage of the mute creation, there is nothing that looks like Eden; no fragrant alcove, no woodland songsters, no murmuring rills, no ripe clusters dropping into earth's green lap: but the dry ravines, and the staring precipices, and the burning sand, pinnacles blasted by the sirocco and glazed by the lightning—the haunt of the satyr and the nest of the vulture—arid, calcined, hot—the embers of a world in ruin, the skeleton from which the paradise has been torn off and hurled away.

But here, amidst the silence, Jesus found a sacred occupation for the six successive weeks. Released from the toils of Nazareth, and from its interruptions, He had continuous leisure to meditate on the work given Him to do, and the Son of Man became familiar with those high thoughts which had ever been habitual to the Son of God. Doubtless, prophetic Scripture extended its panorama to His eye, and one by one He pondered those things concerning Himself which must now have an end; and for the work given Him to do He fortified His willing soul by every consideration which the joy set before Him—the glory of God and the salvation of man—could supply. Without intruding too far into the seclusion of this long Sabbath, we believe the tuneful theologian has not greatly erred in saying:—

> "Through that unfathomable treasury
> Of sacred thoughts, and counsels, and decrees,
> Built in the palace of eternity,
> And safely lockèd with three massy keys,
> Whereof Himself by proper right keeps one,
> With intellectual lightness now He ran.

And there He to His human soul unveil'd
The flaming wonders of Divinity ;
A sea through which no seraph's eye e'er sail'd,
So vast, so high, so deep those secrets be.
(God's nearest friend the soul of Jesus is,
Whom He admits to all His privacies.)

There in an adamantine table, by
The hand of goodness fairly writ,
He saw his Incarnation's Mystery,
The reasons, wonders, and the ways of it :
Then freely ranged His contemplation, from
His scornèd cradle to His guarded tomb." [1]

For most of the period, the absorption of His mind made Him independent of the body ; but "when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered." He found Himself weak and exhausted, and had there been a field of standing corn, or a fig-tree—nay, had there been the Baptist's locusts and honey—He would doubtless have taken food and sustained His fainting soul. And just at this instant there joined Him a stranger—the first He had seen in this desolate spot—and made a suggestion. Not improbably in the guise of a holy hermit, possibly assuming to be one of John's disciples, who, in the eagerness of his devotion, had followed the Messiah into His retirement, and was at last rejoiced to overtake Him ; he pitied His emaciation, and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." It was the devil in disguise. He had his doubts whether Jesus were indeed the Son of God, and the fiery dart was barbed at either end. If Jesus were not the Son of God, He would be very apt to try ; and failing to make loaves

[1] Beaumont's *Psyche* (1702), canto ix. 115-7.

from the stones, Satan's anxiety would be ended; the Prince of Darkness still might keep his goods in peace. On the other hand, if Jesus were indeed God's Son, what could be a simpler expedient? Surely His heavenly Father had forgotten Him. No manna had fallen from the sky; no raven had brought Him bread and flesh;—no, never once all these forty evenings. If not speedily relieved, He must sink and die; and then what would become of all His projects? If He was to be the Saviour of others, it was His first duty to preserve His own life, and how could He do this in a way more innocent or more worthy of His own exalted origin? See these stony fragments—these petrified cakes of bread; they invite you to transform them; you have but to say the word, and, lo! you have instantly spread for yourself a table in the wilderness.

Nothing could have been easier; but that simple thing would have stopped the world's salvation. It would have been the tragedy of Eden re-enacted—the story of the Forbidden Fruit repeated. Nothing could have been easier; and He who a few days after made water into wine, could have given the command, and nectar would have foamed from the crag, and a board laden with the rarest viands would have risen from the ground. But, in that case, the bread which came down from heaven would have been recalled, and this world of empty hungry souls must have been left to pine and perish. In doing it, in using for His own relief those miraculous powers which he held for a specific purpose, He would have renounced the form of a servant, and would have violated a great law,

on which the whole of His incarnate history proceeded. That law left all the circumstances of His outward lot to be determined by His Father's good pleasure; and just as He never used for His own comfort those resources which were the constant enrichment of others—as in subsequent days He never bade fountains gush for the assuagement of His thirst, nor over-canopied with a miraculous shelter His own houseless head—as He did not, when surrounded by priestly myrmidons, give the signal to angelic legions, nor startle the mocking crowd by descending from the cross—so now He would neither astonish the tempter, nor outrun the course of God's Providence by summoning a repast from the dust of the desert. Recalling that passage where Moses tells Israel how, in regions where corn never grew and flock never fed, the Most High had regaled them with feasts from the firmament, He reminded His specious adviser that the fiat of Jehovah is sustenance as sure as the produce of the fields. Like the dexterous and scarcely perceptible movement of the skilful swordsman, the text at once transfixed the temptation, and the adversary reeled back when reminded, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Such was the first temptation, and such was its success —a success very different from that subtle insinuation which opened the fatal parley under the Tree of Knowledge, "Yea, and hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree?" Here, there was no surprise, no hesitation, no encouragement to follow up the hinted doubt by a bold denial; but like a flaming missile which drops into a

vacuum, and instantly expires, that fiery dart found nothing in the holy soul of Jesus; and before it had time to smoulder into a wrong desire, or the smallest spark of sin, the fire was out, the dart was dead—the temptation never tempted.

This first incident may teach us the subtlety of Satan. There can be little doubt, we think, that in the first instance the tempter came, if not as an absolute angel of light, at least in some harmless form, and with friendly professions. Whether "the aged man, in rural weeds," whom our great bard has pictured—or the "old man his devotions singing," whom an earlier poet[1] represents as "lowting low with prone obeisance and curtsey kind"—or, as we have ventured to suggest, some modest and ingenuous-looking inquirer—there was assuredly nothing in his aspect to alarm suspicion, or draw from the horrified beholder, a "Satan, avaunt!" And if his mien was plausible, his speech was smooth. Along with his desire to identify the Saviour, he wished still more to stagger His faith; and such is the audacity of him, who, if possible, would deceive the very elect, that on this occasion he sought to make the very Christ an infidel. "If thou be the Son of God!" "If that was a true testimony which you received at Jordan—if you believe that voice which you so lately heard from heaven, though present appearances, methinks, belie it—if you really believe yourself to be the beloved Son of God, command these stones to be made bread." And yet, though the blasphemy was so bold that you would fancy it must have affrighted its author,

[1] Giles Fletcher.

it did not disturb his composure, nor did it agitate his mind so as to interfere with his cunning. And although to the Prince of Darkness it was a critical moment, and not impossibly might hurl him into an instantaneous and deeper perdition, such self-control had long practice in all atrocities given him, that he was able to enter on the awful experiment without any visible tremor, and could put forth his suggestion with all the *naïveté* of innocence, and all the kindness of anxious compassion.

And not to say that the villany is worst which is the most graceful and accomplished, the temptation is, to a religious or respectable man, the most dangerous, which solicits him to the doing of some little thing. Dr. A. Clarke had a very attentive hearer, who was often much affected by the Word, but who never could find peace in believing. At last he turned ill, and after many interviews, Dr. Clarke said, "Sir, it is not often that God deals thus with a soul so deeply humbled as yours, and so earnestly seeking redemption through the blood of His Son. There must be a cause for this." The gentleman raised himself in bed, and fixing his eyes on the minister, told how, years ago, taking his voyage to England, he saw some merchants of the place give the captain a bag of dollars to carry to a correspondent. He marked the captain's carelessness in leaving it rolling on the locker day after day, and, for the purpose of frightening him, he hid it. No inquiry was made, and on arriving at their destination, the merchant still retained it, till it should be missed. At last the parties to whom it was consigned inquired for it, and an angry correspondence commenced;

hearing of which the gentleman got frightened, and resolved to keep his secret. The captain was thrown into prison, and died. "Guilt," added the dying man, "had by this time hardened my mind. I strove to be happy by stifling my conscience with the cares and amusements of the world—but in vain. I at last heard you preach; and then it was that the voice of God broke in on my conscience, and reasoned with me of righteousness and of judgment to come. Hell got hold upon my spirit: I have prayed; I have deplored; I have agonized at the throne of mercy, for the sake of Christ, for pardon; but God is deaf to my prayer, and casts out my petition: there is no mercy for me; I must go down into the grave unpardoned, unsaved." The captain's widow was still alive, and to her and her children Dr. Clarke was the medium of paying over the sum, with compound interest, obtaining an acknowledgment, which he kept till his dying day; and soon after, the conscience-stricken penitent died in peace, having obtained the hope of pardon. But the incident illustrates the subtlety of Satan. The man was respectable, and had it been put to him, "Are you capable of stealing? Do you think you could commit a murder? Are you one that could allow an innocent man to languish in prison for your crime, and go down to the grave covered with infamy, for a fault which, not he, but you committed?" "Is thy servant a dog?" would have been the indignant reply to the revolting suggestion. But for fine-grained timber, for oaks and cedars, the devil has sharp wedges, as well as coarser instruments for ignoble natures; and here the edge was very fine; a

trick—a practical jest—a frolic—but a frolic which, like many fools' firebrands, ended in a sad conflagration; in theft and murder, in orphanage and widowhood, in the ruin of a reputation, and in the misery and remorse of the perpetrator.

As a set-off, we may mention a simple incident in the life of a pious servant. She was in a family where next to nothing was given for religious or charitable objects; and one morning, in arranging one of the rooms, she found a bag containing a number of guineas. The temptation instantly occurred, "Should not I take two of these gold pieces? I could get silver for them, and I know several poor people who stand in great need of some assistance. But if I do not give it to them, I am sure that not one farthing of the money will ever go that way." It was a plausible suggestion—for her object was benevolent; and as she went on with her work she still thought of the gold pieces and the shivering poor, till she made up her mind that to take them was perfectly right. With this view she was returning to the bag, when these words of God rushed into her memory, "I hate robbery for burnt-offering;" and, scared away by this opportune scripture, the temptation fled, and the poor servant escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler.[1] She had the advantage of being not only respectable but religious, and He who on this occasion rescued her from the snare of the devil, kept her by His mighty power to an honoured old age, and a joyful departure. For her escape this humble disciple was indebted to the self-same weapon

[1] *Jean Smith.* By the Rev. J. Morison, Port-Glasgow.

which the Captain of her salvation wielded in the wilderness—that sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Jesus greatly needed bread, but the tempter dared not hint to Him to procure it by means of fraud or violence. The utmost he could hope was that, wearied out with long waiting, He might be induced to help Himself, and, instead of trying to live any longer on the Father's mere promise, that He might adopt a suggestion which would appease His hunger and injure no one. And as it is this "bread" which forms our great necessity, so it is to unbelieving and unchristian ways of procuring it that we are mainly tempted. The devil does not say to us, "Drill a hole in yonder jeweller's shutter: forge a bank-note: knock down a passenger and steal his purse;" but he says, "You must live, and in order to live you must have bread. You have tried every way, but God has done nothing for you. This waiting won't do—you must see to yourself. Suppose you take a ticket in the lottery, or try your luck at cards or billiards? Or what would you say to open a public-house, or take shares in a Sunday tavern? You have a fine voice; you might sing in the choir of a Popish chapel. You have a turn for recitation; I have seen many a worse actor on the stage." And in this way, by making the bread that perisheth the prime necessity, and the soul a thing quite secondary, many have been tempted to gamble, to borrow from their employer's till, to open shop on Sunday, to use the balances of deceit, to forge, to purloin, to peculate—till at last, entangled by snare upon snare, they sank down reprobate and reckless, disgusted with this world, and despairing of

the next one, scarcely caring, and never hoping to burst that bond of iniquity in which the devil leads them captive at his will.

PART II.

FOILED in one stratagem, the tempter instantly tried another; and that other was not only necessitated but was most likely suggested by the failure of the first. In his dealings with mankind, the devil had so often found virtues leaning to frailty's side—he had reaped so many of his greatest successes by pressing good points to an inordinate extreme, that he hoped to extract some sin from the excessive faith of Jesus. It would appear the greatest delight of the incarnate Son to depend on the love and power of His heavenly Father; might He not be induced to carry that dependence too far, and so render it not devout but presumptuous? Was there no fine stroke which would convert this faith into fanaticism? Accordingly, the scene was changed; and no longer in the waste and howling wilderness, they found themselves in the Holy City and on the battlements of the Temple. Looking down from the dizzy elevation, they had a full view of all the worshippers; and His assiduous attendant at once suggested to the Saviour that He should cast Himself down into their midst. "You are the Son of God? You are about to begin your ministry? Where more fitly can you commence it, than here in God's own house?

And in what manner more striking can you make your first manifestation to Israel, than just by floating down, from the clouds, as it would look, into the centre of that throng? The Messenger of the Covenant would then, indeed, be suddenly come to His temple, and instant acclamations would welcome the Heaven-descended Messiah." Further, having in the previous encounter not only detected Jesus' faith in God, but His fondness for Scripture, with wonderful adroitness the tempter turns it to his purpose—not merely assailing what he suspected to be the weak point, but plying that point with what he deemed the most effective weapon. "Your trust in God is wonderful. Such is your confidence in His promises that you would not help yourself to food, for fear of showing doubt or impatience. You spoke as if you could subsist on these promises. If they will do for food, they will surely do for wings. Here is an opportunity of showing your sincerity. *I* say to you, cast Thyself down; and *God* says He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up. There is no escape. If you be the Son of God, you must give me this sign. The promise is buoyant. The air teems with angels; and upborne in their hands you will not hurt your foot on the pavement."

Need we say how alien from the entire genius of Christ's procedure such a demonstration would have been? Radiant with Divine energy as He was, He veiled His glory, and reserved His resources; and even when in after days a wonder was wrought, the most wonderful thing was the simplicity with which it transpired. So little was done

for effect, so little of scenic glare or intentional display was there in the miracles of Jesus, that His familiar attendants saw Him constantly opening blind eyes, healing incurables, and raising the dead without feeling as if aught very strange were taking place. Not only had they come to regard Him as one from whom such things proceeded spontaneously, and very much as things of course, but He had a way of doing them which, although it added to their eventual sublimity, lessened their *éclat* at the moment. Like Himself and His kingdom, Christ's miracles came without observation. There was nothing dramatic or explosive about them. No trumpet sounded beforehand—no flush of exultation followed; but whilst the lame man was yet leaping, and the crowd was still gazing, Jesus went on His way. His mighty deeds were not the rare efforts of a borrowed power, but the forth-letting of a familiar and redundant omnipotence; and being wrought by a Divine Personage in a holy disguise, He had rather to restrain than exhibit His resources. Convincing and endearing, they did not dazzle nor excite; and, in short, like the fiat of the Creator, which might any moment add a new lily to the field, or a new lamp to the firmament, the mighty deeds of Jesus were neither noisy portents nor ostentatious prodigies, but miracles—the stately emanations of that mighty Will which does nothing for display, and to which the hosannahs of a crowded temple, or the shouts of Morning Stars, would be alike a poor requital.

To introduce Himself to the Jewish people by a flight from on high, would have been to commence on a key-note entirely out of unison with His lowly ministry; and,

besides, it would have pandered to that taste for the marvellous, which prefers to a Godlike miracle a vulgar prodigy. Satan knew this, and so knew the Saviour. But instead of arguing the question, the Captain of salvation fell back on, "Thus it is written." Scripture is the interpreter of Scripture; and just as one Divine perfection may set limits to another—as God's wisdom may be the limit of His power—as His truth or holiness may be the limit of His benevolence—so, in Scripture, one truth may be the limit of another; or, as in the case before us, a precept may be the limit of a promise. It is true God gives to His angels a charge concerning His saints, but then He gives His saints a charge concerning themselves; and if the angels are not to forget the saints, neither are the saints to tempt the Lord their God. Observe the condition, and the result is infallible. Fulfil you the precept, and God will fulfil the promise. But to leap from this pinnacle when there is no end to be answered—to spring into the air when it is not God, but Satan, who gives the command—this is to tempt Jehovah; and God's will must be done, even although the doing of it should look so pusillanimous as to provoke a sneer from the devil.

A most instructive incident, teaching us the importance of comparing Scripture with Scripture. A text may be wrested—witness the tempter's quotation; but the Scriptures cannot be broken—witness the Saviour's retort. Some people split the Bible. They set aside all the precepts, and appropriate all the promises; they cull out all the doctrines, and do away with all the duties; and in this one-sided fashion they never become the blessed and

beautiful characters which that Bible could make them. Like those quadrumanous mimics of mankind whose hand lacks an opposable finger, their thumbless theology goes on all-fours, and it bears the same relation to revealed religion as the ape or the satyr bears to humanity. Others, again, select from the Bible a series of ethical maxims; and, ignoring all which it reveals of sin and the Saviour, they treat it as a manual of excellent morality. Their model has all the form and features which go to constitute ethical symmetry or ideal perfection; and like the strings or clock-work which bends the limbs and opens and shuts the eyes of such a figure, it may not be without impulses and motives of its own; but, as long as it lacks a soul, after all it is only an automaton. That character is alone complete where life develops in symmetry—where love to God inspires the heart, and His revealed will decides the conduct.

An instructive incident, further, as showing the difference between faith and fanaticism. Faith listens to God's voice, and follows where Scripture leads it by the hand. Fanaticism has inward lights, and mystic voices, and new revelations, and scorns the sober ways, the good old paths of the written record. Faith compares Scripture with Scripture, and with docile patience gathers from its sundry places the entire mind of the Spirit. Fanaticism, when it deigns to consult the Word at all, is proud and precipitate, and pouncing on the text which serves its turn, has no tolerance for any other which would restrict or expand its meaning. Faith has a creed of many articles, and its decalogue has ten commands. Fanaticism

resolves morality into a solitary virtue, and its orthodoxy is summed up in a single tenet. Such a fanatic, had he heard on the temple-roof a whisper in his ear, "Cast thyself down hence," would scarcely have waited to ascertain whether the voice came from a good spirit or a demon; or had he paused for a moment, and then been reminded of the promise, "For he shall give his angels charge concerning thee," he would have felt it a crime to hesitate. But he that believeth will not make such haste; and after hearing both the suggestion and the Scripture proof, that great Believer to whom it was addressed held up to the proposal the torch of truth, and declared it presumptuous and Heaven-provoking.

Reader, try the spirits. Error is often plausible, and the most ensnaring errors are those which have an obvious resemblance to truth. Even though the outside coating is not brass but real gold, the leaden coin is none the less a counterfeit; and, like the devil's temptation, wrapped up in a Scripture saying, many false doctrines come now-a-days with a sacred or a spiritual glamour round them —quoting texts and uttering Bible phrases. But the question is not, Who has got a text on his side? but, Who has got the Bible?—not, Who can produce certain sentences torn from their connexion, and reft of the purport which that connexion gives them? but, Looking at Scripture in its integrity—having regard to its general drift, as well as to the bearing of these special passages—who is it that makes the fairest appeal to the statute-book of Heaven?

A second time baffled, there remained another bolt in

the grim archer's quiver. The Son-like confidence of Jesus had never faltered; and neither to the left hand of distrust, nor to the right hand of presumption, had the fiercest shocks been able to bend His columnar constancy. The tactics were, therefore, changed. Sudden surprise had failed, stratagem had failed, and plausible hypocritical suggestion had failed. If the devil himself had doubted the Sonship of the Saviour, these doubts were at an end —for there is no conditional "If thou be" in the last temptation; and if he had hoped to make the Saviour for a moment question His own paternity, that hope was over —for he now leaves the point in abeyance. But Lucifer remembered the temptation which had prevailed with himself, when "he fell from service to a throne;" and surmising that the nobler the nature the more likely it was to feel the attractions of glory, he thought he knew what would deflect from His orbit the Sun of Righteousness himself. Borne away to some lofty hill, a magic prospect rose up. They saw the river which bears the wealth of mysterious mountains to Egypt's green valley, and on whose banks the Pharaohs sleep grandly in their sphinx-guarded sepulchres. They saw the bright isles of Greece, on whose summits white temples sparkled, and on whose strand the bounding billows clapped their musical cymbals. They saw the Seven Hills, and the proud Capitol, like an Atlas, bending under its mountain of marble. They saw the pearls still deep in the ocean, and the diamonds not yet dug from the mine. They saw the Indian pagoda rainbowed with gems, and the Peruvian sun-temple with its mirrors of flashing

gold. And a mist of music came floating up from the glory; and as its murmur waxed clearer and resolved into a thousand tones, along with the note of the nightingale came pulses of the lyre from fragrant Italy; from yonder Attic groves a flow of silvery sweetness, and from that swarming Forum words of sharp and ringing energy: whilst wafted from those red Parthian fields, and louder than far-off Niagara, rent the air a long loud shout of Roman victory. "All that is mine; and one obeisance will make it yours," cried the tempter; and as he spake, a diadem flamed on his brow, and he stood forth every inch a king. The costliest bait ever flung at the feet of Innocence—the Man of Nazareth looked at it with an eye that did not sparkle, and a heart that did not flutter: then turning to the princely tempter, He exclaimed, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Oh, what a smile from the heart of the Father burst in at these words on the soul of the beloved Son; and what a sob of triumph relieved the suspended breath of spectator angels! It was the first great victory of the Second Adam. It was the turning of the tide in the history of our defeated and enslaved humanity. It was a triumph where the gain was all on the side of goodness; and from which the azure banner of the Eternal Law came back without one speck on its lustre, or a moment's recession of its planted sign. It was the great enslaver and tyrant defeated, and the earnest of paradise regained. "Get thee behind me, Satan. I hope to see these kingdoms and all their glory my own: but I shall earn them

not by doing homage to the usurper, but by obedience to my Father—by worshipping the Lord my God."

It was a glorious victory, and, reader, it was ours. It was the victory of our Head and Representative. It was the Second Adam doing what the first should have done, and so far undoing the evil which he did. It was the scene in the garden reversed; it was the crime of another Fall escaped, and the curse of Eden read backwards. It was the embodiment of all evil encountered and overcome by the Church's great Champion: encountered in those successive forms of temptation which had so often proved fatal; as the sympathizing visitor with a friendly suggestion—as the scoffing spectator with a taunting challenge—as the gross and open seducer with the most splendid lure ever offered to ambition; and overcome, not by the mere might of Omnipotence, but by those weapons which all along had lain ready for such exigencies in the Church's armoury.

Blessed Jesus, we thank Thee! We could not have done it. But Thou hast broken the snare of the fowler, and along with Thee our silly souls are escaped. O Lion of the tribe of Judah, our adversary still goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Make us aware of his devices. Bruise him under our feet. Succour us when tempted. Touched with a feeling of our infirmities, Thou who wast in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, let us fight beneath Thy buckler, and teach us how to wield Thy sword—that sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

MIRACLES.

I.—CANA: THE WEDDING FEAST.

By the modern system of chapter-divisions, which has in some instances been arbitrarily or unskilfully carried out, it is to be regretted that the story of Cana is cut in sunder. In other words, it is to be regretted that the beginning of the second chapter of St. John's Gospel is so seldom read in immediate connexion with the close of the chapter preceding.

Nathanael, the "Israelite indeed," was a native or inhabitant of Cana. He was convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus by the tokens of omniscience which the words of Jesus conveyed, and, pleased with the frankness of his faith, Jesus said, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Because I have read your thoughts, and revealed your secret resting-place beneath the fig-tree, you believe that I am the Son of God, the King of Israel, for whom you and your compatriots are now looking. But soon shall

you witness incidents more surprising. Heaven is about to open, and its angels will attend My bidding. A career of wonders is about to begin, which will show you that the powers of a higher world surround My person, and that not only all knowledge but all might belongs to the Son of man.

Accordingly, three days after, at Cana of Galilee, Jesus made a commencement of His miracles, letting out His latent power; and in that first flush of opening heaven—in that manifestation of their Master's glory—the faith of His disciples was confirmed (John ii. 11). Of these disciples, Nathanael was one; and even if he had not gone to the marriage as one of the four or five disciples already attached to Jesus—and even if we do not suppose that it was Nathanael's own wedding, for the sake of which Jesus and His disciples had consented to tarry these three days in Cana—there can be little doubt that the good Israelite was present on an occasion sure to assemble all the notabilities of his native village, and that in the prodigy which astonished all the guests he saw the first instalment of the "greater things" which Christ had promised.[1]

Amongst the Jews a wedding was a joyous celebration, of which the festivities extended over many days, and, besides friends and acquaintances, the whole neighbourhood often came together. Whether on this occasion there was a greater concourse than their hosts had ex-

[1] As there can be little doubt that Nathanael was present at this commencement of miracles, so we are expressly told that he was present at the miracle in which the mighty works of the Saviour were concluded (John xxi. 2). So amply was the promise fulfilled, "Thou shalt see greater things."

pected, at all events, as the feast proceeded, the mother of Jesus came to Him, and said, "They have no wine." The very fact of her resorting to Him shows that Mary had not forgotten the sayings which long ago she pondered in her heart, and that she felt no emergency could be so great but that means of extrication were in the power of her wonderful Son. Still His answer appeared rather a repulse than a compliance—"Woman, what is that to thee and Me?" "We are not responsible for the supply of the banquet. Besides, 'mine hour is not yet come.' You know that I have not yet commenced that course of miracles, one of which you now wish me to perform." There would, however, seem to have been something more encouraging in His aspect than in His words; for, as if thoroughly confident that He was about to interpose, Mary said to the attendants, "Whatever he desires, be sure you do it." And He did interpose. At that period the Jews had carried to a finical extreme the ablutions of the Levitical law; and before they would sit down to a meal, for fear they might have contracted some casual impurity, they had water poured over their hands. To provide a supply for such purposes there were on this occasion, placed either in the banquet-room, or somewhere near hand, six great amphoræ or water-jars, and these Jesus bade the servants fill with water up to the brim. And as soon as they told Him that the vessels were filled, He bade them pour out a specimen, and carry it to the master of the ceremonies. As soon as he tasted this fresh supply, and perceived its exquisite aroma, he said to the bridegroom in whose house the banquet was given, "The

usual way is to begin with good wine, and then come to the inferior quality; but thou hast kept the good wine until now." But the miracle thus graciously wrought to relieve the embarrassment of their hospitable entertainers, not only filled the wedding guests with amazement, but, in conjunction with the Baptist's testimony, and the impressions of their own brief intercourse, was a mighty confirmation to the faith of Christ's disciples. In the power which willed water into wine they recognised a creative energy, and they saw that to the intuitions of the omniscient Heart-Searcher, their Master added the resistless volition which speaks and it is done.

It was a simple commencement—the simple commencement of a stupendous history. It was not such a commencement as human ostentation would have chosen: a rural hamlet, a village wedding, a house where the owners were too poor to provide for the guests. A few weeks previously there had been offered to Him a nobler theatre—a theatre the grandest which the god of this world could select. He had stood on a pinnacle of the temple, in the very focus of the faithful, in the midst of Jerusalem, in the heart of the Holy Land; and as the worshippers poured into the populous courts, and as far beneath His feet He eyed spectators, who were themselves a spectacle—the men of mark, the priests and scribes, the scholars and the sages of the day, and that multitude who were daily expecting the advent of Messiah; it was suggested to Him, Cast thyself down hence, for His angels will upbear thee. Surely that would have been a worthy commencement, a fit beginning of miracles,—from yonder

dizzy turret to glide down on no other pinions than His own sustaining will, and astonish the assembled throng as if by a descent from the firmament. But dazzling as the demonstration would have been, the Saviour declined it; and the career which was to end in rending the rocks and raising the dead, in eclipsing the sun and in bedarkening a guilty land—that career commenced in the supernatural supply of a little wine to a few peasants at a village festival.

So truly Divine is simplicity. And like the King of heaven, all that is truly kingly, all that is heavenly, "comes not with observation." That prodigy awoke no plaudits throughout Palestine; but it attracted august spectators. "Heaven" was "open," and in doing it, Immanuel was "seen of angels." It astonished no philosopher, no emperor; it only confirmed the faith of a few fishermen who had become disciples already: and yet it was the first in that series of which the Redeemer's resurrection and ascension were the last, and on whose firm foundation Christianity stands—the vast and ever-during fabric.

It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master. Up to that hour His time was not yet come; our time is always ready. There is not a career of wonders before us; but there is a career of well-doing. Jesus calls us to glory and virtue. He bids us receive and employ the grace of the Comforter. In His own name, and in the strength of His Spirit, as sinners forgiven, and as affectionate followers of the forgiving Saviour, He summons us to His own high calling of God-glorifying, world-

bettering beneficence. And, reader, for your outset seek no far-off nor arduous starting-point. You need ascend no pinnacle. You need go up to no Jerusalem. Let your Sabbath-class or your servants be your Cana; let your fireside or your tea-table, this evening, be like that banquet-room in Galilee, the beginning of your self-conquests, the commencement of a franker and truer Christianity, a mightier and more assiduous manifestation of your Master's glory. Thus, too, will the water turn to wine. Thus will common life, brightening beneath the Saviour's eye, begin to glow with a sacramental richness and a heavenly radiance, and ordinary incidents and engagements will acquire a sacred relish, reminding you of the great Transformer. And better still: this beginning of discipleship will be the first step in a progressive piety —a Cana which will be followed by its own Gadara, and Bethany, and Olivet; and as you yourself see greater things than these—as your own faith confirms, and your own devotion deepens—and as you find in the growing consolations of the Holy Spirit, that the Bridegroom keeps His best to the last—the disciples whom your early fervour impressed, and whom your later faith confirmed, will feel that where the glory is Immanuel's, there are no bounds to the manifestation, and that where the water of ordinary life pours out the new wine of the kingdom, there is no risk that either goodness or comfort will ever run dry.

The miracles of Jesus have all a spiritual or ethical import. They were not isolated portents, unmeaning though surprising prodigies. They were "signs"—miracles wrought with a purpose, and revealing the mind

of their Author. For example, in the case before us, which primarily illustrates the power of Jesus, and which is a striking attestation of His divine commission—when we look at the circumstances in which it is imbedded—when we inquire, What glimpses of Christ's heart, what intimations of Christ's plans and wishes does it yield? we think that we perceive a certain light which it throws on the nature of Christ's kingdom, as a kingdom neither austere nor ascetic, and a further light which it throws on Christ's disposition, as full of delicate considerateness and Divine munificence.

John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking. Most likely, the forerunner was never at such a feast; and with his matted locks and sun-burnt visage; with his leather belt and his hairy hyke; with his dish of locusts and his cup of cold water—to say nothing of stern, sequestered looks and unsocial habits—the second Elias, by his very presence, would have petrified the banquet into a stiff and silent ceremony. But Jesus of Nazareth was a man of another make and mien. Whilst in Himself independent of all created joy, and whilst to the Lord of angels and to the Entertainer of worlds it was a deep condescension to become the guest of man; yet as the founder of the Christian system He fulfilled all righteousness, and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. And as there was a danger lest in subsequent times men should misunderstand—as even then there were Essenes who held that perfection consists in abstaining from all the enjoyments of sense, "Touch not, taste not, handle not those things which perish in the using;" and as the Saviour

foresaw that within His own Church men would arise forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats which God has created to be received with thanksgiving—the Son of man came eating and drinking. He made His entry on public life at a friendly festival, and pronounced "marriage honourable in all," by working His first miracle to promote the enjoyment of a wedding company. And all through His public ministry He went on the same principle. Himself so holy and separate from sin, He cheerfully accepted the hospitalities to which He was invited; and not only as the guest of the pious Lazarus and the rigid Simeon, but by taking His disciples to dine with Levi and Zaccheus, to the great scandal of the Pharisees —He taught us, that separateness from sin is one thing, and separation from society another; that the pure religion which keeps us unspotted from the world is not the sanctimoniousness which, with a view to self-preservation, secludes itself, but the sanctity which still more effectually preserves itself in seeking its own diffusion.

The Saviour sought to make His disciples not non-human, but holy. He came not to alter human nature, but to restore it. He came to repair the devil's destruction of man's primitive constitution. By becoming flesh of our flesh, the Son of God became the Second Adam, and now the Head of every redeemed man is Christ. And, whilst the object of corrupted Christianity is to make us *imperfect angels*, the object of the Redeemer was to make us *perfect men*. There was nothing ascetic, nothing monastic, in all His precepts or practice; and of all His natural goodness, of all the cures He wrought, and all the miraculous supplies

He provided, as well as of all the innocent festivities which, by His presence, He sanctified, the great lesson was, that He had come not to destroy the flesh, but "to destroy sin in the flesh;" not to make His disciples fasters and flagellants, hermits and recluses, monks and nuns, but—what is far more difficult, and needs an exertion more Divine—to make them holy men and holy women, pious householders and God-fearing guests, good servants and good citizens—such sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty as were our first parents before they fell.

Far more difficult than the anchorite's separation from the world is the Christian's sojourn in it; and, though rare, it is beautiful to see those believers in whose behalf their Lord's intercession has evidently been heard, and who, before they are taken finally out of the world, are "kept from the evil" in it; those men of single purpose who, "whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, do all to the glory of God." And as social intercourse is so great a portion of most men's existence, as the time which is not absorbed in business is more of it spent in seeing one another than in reading books or in meditation and prayer, surely the art of profitable intercourse is worth some study. And, without too much straitening that simplicity, and unreserve, and excursiveness, which are the great charm of the social circle—without converting every meeting of friends into a theological congress or a scientific reunion—might not a great deal be done to render our incidental gatherings feasts of reason, and feasts of religion too? Might not recreation be secured without altogether losing sight of intellectual and spiritual improvement? Must wit

prove fatal to wisdom, and is it necessary that sense should cease where recreation begins? And should we not often return with a much happier sensation from the evening's intercourse, if conscious that we ourselves had contributed or induced others to contribute, what was fitted to expand the intellect, or purify the taste, or hallow the affections of those with whom we came in contact?

More particularly by the occasion on which He wrought this miracle, Christ gave His sanction to the primeval ordinance of marriage. We must remember that we are now at the gate of Paradise re-opened. The Saviour is undoing the works of the Devil, and is recovering for His people the forfeited Eden. The serpent has been bruised, the tempter has been foiled, and the path to the tree of life is again to be thrown open. And if there is to be any change, now is the time for announcing it. In the early Paradise it was not good for man to be alone; but if in the Christian Church it is good, now is the time for the Church's Founder to declare it. But by that beginning of miracles the Son of God declared that He had not come to destroy domestic life, but to undo the devil's desecration of it, by restoring its sanctity and its happiness.

Lightly as it is often gone about, and joyless as it sometimes proves, like the Sabbath itself, this primitive institution still survives, a small but precious salvage from the world's great shipwreck, and, like the Sabbath, showing how much the Creator's institutions can do to promote the creature's blessedness. Even where the knowledge of the true God was lost, this boon of His has in many cases lingered, and the wives of Pætus and

Pliny, and the mother of the Gracchi, are witnesses how the sublimest and loveliest ingredients of our nature have been elicited, even among the heathen, by the right observance of a single relation. As coming nearer our own time, as neither withdrawn into the remoteness of antiquity, nor elevated into the rare and heroic grandeur of those who, like the wife of Grotius and Madame De Lavalette, were the means of rescuing their husbands from captivity; or that more heroic instance still of a Livonian maid, whose betrothed was sentenced to banishment, but who married him in his prison that she might share his exile in Siberia:—as modern instances, and as good every-day illustrations of the last chapter of Proverbs, and all the better as coming from a range of illustration external to Christian biography, we may quote the words of two distinguished lawyers and statesmen, who ascribed their eminence to helps meet for them. The first is Sir James Mackintosh, who thus writes of his:—"By the tender management of my weaknesses, she cured the worst of them. She became prudent from affection; and though of the most generous nature, she was taught economy and frugality by her love for me. She gently reclaimed me from dissipation; she propped my weak and irresolute nature; she urged my indolence to all the exertions that have been useful or creditable to me; and she was perpetually at hand to admonish my heedlessness and improvidence. To her I owe whatever I am; to her, whatever I shall be." And in a beautiful passage in one of his journals, Sir Samuel Romilly, taking a retrospect of twenty years which had been inspired by

the society of "a most intelligent mind, a cheerful disposition, a noble and generous way of thinking, an elevation and heroism of character, and a warm and tender affection, such as are very rare," ascribes to that source mainly, not only the many and exquisite enjoyments of his life, but his extraordinary success in his profession.

To a relation so sacred, and which has developed some of the finest features of humanity, the Head of the Church has given His immediate approval and sanction; and happy are the contracting parties who invite to the marriage that Divine Guest who graced the wedding in Galilee. Happy the wives whose lovely piety—not lecturing, not reprimanding or reproving—but whose meek and quiet spirit—whose silent persuasion—wins those husbands whom "the word" has failed to win. Happy the husbands who—loving their wives as Jesus loved the Church, with a benevolent and self-sacrificing affection, in order to sanctify it, in order to present it to Himself a glorious and spotless Church—convey along with their affection ennobling sentiments and lofty aspirations, and who impart the robustness of principle to that goodness which has softened their sternness, and around their sturdier virtues shed the charm of its own endearing gentleness. Happy those partners who, like Aquila and Priscilla, are united in the Lord, and who think and consult and labour together in the service of the same Saviour. Happy those who, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, walk in all the statutes and ordinances blameless, and who walk all the longer and all the better because they walk arm-in-arm.

II.

BETHESDA: A REMARKABLE RECOVERY.

NEAR the Sheep-gate at Jerusalem was a pool which the Most High had endowed with a miraculous virtue. At certain intervals—the evangelist does not say how often, whether it was daily, or weekly, or once a year, nor does he say how long the pool had possessed this virtue, but at certain intervals—"an angel went down and troubled the waters; and after the water began to be agitated, whosoever was the first to step in was cured of his disease, whatever it might be." There was mercy in the miracle, and Bethesda was one of the blessings, as well as one of the wonders of the Holy City. But the boon was restricted. It corresponded to that limited economy under which "salvation was of the Jews," and when there were few indeed that were saved. The opportunity was of rare recurrence—perhaps confined to the Passover and other sacred festivals—and the sufferers who could benefit were only a few, and these not always the most urgent cases. The paralysed, the lame, and the impotent were apt to be forestalled by sturdier patients, and the very persons whose case was the most deplorable were often unable to reach the pool till the virtue had

vanished. In Bethesda God taught the Jews what He is daily teaching ourselves—that, in order to carry out His beneficent arrangements, human sympathy must second the Divine generosity. God sent the angel, and made Bethesda therapeutic; but unless the sound and the healthy assisted the halt and the powerless, Bethesda was troubled in vain. There is goodness enough in Creation and Providence to make all the men of England comfortable, contented, and happy; but unless the virtuous and well-conditioned put forth a helping hand, and assist their abject and ignorant neighbours, millions may perish on the brink of Bethesda. And there is life enough in the gospel, a vitalizing virtue sufficient to heal all nations; and, blessed be God! that gospel is a fountain whose angel is never absent—whose virtue never fails; but unless there be kind Christian hands to lift the lethargic dreamers who bestrew the brink, and to help forward the frail and tottering steps which can hardly find the way, a multitude of impotent folk, halt, and withered, may die amidst the means of salvation.

Round Bethesda five porticoes or piazzas had been erected, most likely to shelter from the weather the waiting invalids. In one of these porticoes, as He passed on a certain Sabbath, Jesus saw a poor patient lying. He was advanced in years, and it turned out that he had laboured under his malady to the full extent of an ordinary human life—no less than eight-and-thirty years. As there he lay on his mat, with his pain-worn features, he moved the pity of the Man of Mercies. In answer to Christ's inquiry, "Wilt thou be made whole?" it appeared

that it was from no want of anxiety or exertion on his own part that he continued a sufferer so long. He had tried it often; but he was too poor to pay for an attendant, and when the propitious moment arrived, before he could crawl to the verge, some sturdier expectant vaulted in and carried off the cure. Knowing the story to be true, Jesus eyed him with that mingled look of power and compassion which created faith wherever it alighted, and said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Never doubting, never remonstrating, asking no question, and interposing no difficulty, the man instantly arose, and rolling up the mat, laid it on his shoulder, and walked away. "What! carrying a burden on the Sabbath-day!" exclaimed the infuriated spectators; and to appease their outraged zeal, the poor man pleaded the command of his merciful Restorer. But fanaticism would not be content with such an apology. "Where is the man"—not, Where is the man who has so wonderfully cured you? but—"Where is the man who said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?" But Jesus was no longer there; and it was not till a later hour that the convalescent was able to point out his Benefactor. Jesus found him in the temple, and, whilst his heart was still soft with recent obligation, said, "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Feeling it needful to his own vindication, and hoping, perhaps, that the hostility of the Pharisees would be disarmed when they knew who had wrought the wonder, the man told them it was Jesus. "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day."

"An infirmity thirty and eight years!" How the soul of the sufferer would have sunk could any one have foretold, when his disease was only commencing, how long it was to last! Young man, you have sinned, and this evil has befallen you. And it will not soon go away. The physician is not yet born into the world who can cure you. You say, The pain is terrible to bear; but you must bear it eight-and-thirty years. The present generation will be gone, and your own head will be grey, before you know again what it is to have an hour of health and soundness. But this fearful foreknowledge was mercifully withheld, and scope was left for that happy instinct which is a relic of the innocent era in the history of our race, and closely connected with man's instinct of immortality. The sufferer had room for hope. He felt it worth while to try the remedies. Morning by morning he could creep to Bethesda; and though so often tantalized and disappointed, he could trust that the next turn would be more propitious; and how could he tell but that this day was the set time for favour, and after being so often baulked and baffled, what if this were the blessed day which should end his misery, and send him back to his fellows a restored and joyful convalescent!

Better, however, than the most sanguine expectation of a cure, is the sanctified use of sickness. God has different ways of making His children holy; but with many it is His plan to make them perfect through sufferings. Says Baxter, in his note on this passage, "How great a mercy was it to live thirty-eight years under God's wholesome discipline! O my God, I thank Thee for the like discip-

line of fifty-eight years; how safe is this in comparison of full prosperity and pleasure."[1] And in a similar spirit has it been sung by one who was an invalid as many years as this poor man was impotent:—

"Had but the prison walls been strong,
And firm without a flaw,
In darkness faith had dwelt too long,
And less of glory saw.

But now the everlasting hills
Through every chink appear,
And something of the joy she feels,
While yet a pris'ner here!

The shines of heaven rush sweetly in
At all the gaping flaws,
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws."[2]

To the praise of the glory of His grace who perfects strength in weakness, be it known that there is no ailment so protracted, nor any paroxysm so overwhelming, but that even as the suffering abounds the consolation can also abound. As one expressed it, who was subject to manifold tribulations, "The promise, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be,' has been so fulfilled that I could feel strength given my soul each moment to bear up against the exhaustion of my body."[3] And another, who for thirty-seven years was "gold tried in the fire," "I experience so much of the Saviour's love in supporting me under pain, that I cannot fear its increase."[4] And we often recall what was once told us by a sainted friend whose parish was the Grassmarket of Edinburgh—that

[1] Quoted by Blunt, vol. i. p. 96.
[2] Watts' *Lyrics*.
[3] *Memorials of Two Sisters*, p. 220.
[4] *Harriet Stoneman*, p. 149.

when wearied and sickened with the scenes of depravity which he constantly encountered, before returning home for the day he often went to refresh his spirit in a garret where a poor woman was slowly dying of a cancer. But so much of Heaven had come down to that little chamber, that just as in the peace of God the sufferer triumphed over nature's agony, so in sharing her wonderful happiness the man of God forgot the wickedness with which his soul had been vexed all day, as he also forgot the deplorable misery of the tenement in which this beatified spirit still lingered. Glad and glorious infirmity which secures the Saviour's presence, and is sustained in the Saviour's power!

When this poor man was restored, he went to the temple; and it was there that Jesus next found him. Perhaps it was long since he had been there before; and at all events it was a good sign that he found his way thither so soon. Doubtless, he went in the fulness of his heart, as well as in the first use of his renovated members; and most likely he had taken his thank-offering with him.

Meanwhile, let those of us who are able to frequent the house of God not forget "the assembling of ourselves together." Reader, the day must shortly arrive—to some perhaps it has arrived already—when you shall have worshipped your last in the great congregation. And when that Sabbath comes on which you can go thither no longer—when in their Sunday's attire the rest of the household have quitted you, and the bells have fallen silent, and from some neighbouring sanctuary the organic swell or voice of psalms has announced the commence-

ment of the worship, and you know that all the Christianity of the kingdom is now assembled for social prayer and praise—may you not wish that in days of vigour you had been a more attentive listener and a more earnest worshipper? May you not wish that so long as you had a sound and painless head you had thrown more fervour into the public prayer—and whilst your voice was firm and clear, that you had contributed a part more cordial and inspiring to the psalmody? May you not wish that when your faculties were fresh, and before the grasshopper grew burdensome, you had hearkened more alertly to the words of life, and taken home more personally and practically the truth as it is in Jesus? And amidst all the motives to strenuous devotion and earnest hearing, would it not be well to bear in mind such days of darkness, and now be laying up a good foundation against the time to come? Would it not be well in imagination to change places sometimes with the mournful prisoner whose pew is this day vacant, or with the joyful convalescent who regards it as the crowning mercy in his restoration that once more it is said, "Go into the house of the Lord"?

The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath, and as the great Legislator, and Governor of the Church, Jesus interpreted the law of the Sabbath. Under the old economy, the main stress had been laid on the negative or prohibitory side of the Sabbatic command: "Thou shalt do no manner of work: Thou shalt bear no burden on the Sabbath-day;" and with the stricter Jews, he was the best Sabbath-observer who not only abstained from his ordinary employments, but who maintained the largest

amount of general inaction. But the Lord Jesus "fulfilled" the command. By not merely attending the synagogue, but by curing diseases, by caring for the comfort of those around him, by speaking words in season, by filling up the hours with profitable discourse and benevolent deeds—He showed that the Sabbath was not intended to be a day of grim looks, sealed lips, and folded hands, but a day of "delight"—a day of active beneficence as well as cheerful devotion. He took from it that merely negative or prohibitory aspect with which Judaism had clothed it, and restored the Paradisaic institution in all its kindness of design and with its fulness of blessing. Sabbath-keeping, according to the Jews, consisted in doing nothing; according to Jesus, it consisted in "doing good." And as it was on a Sabbath-day that He first encountered this poor invalid, on the great principle that mercy is the best form of sacrifice, the Lord Jesus healed him at once; and on the same principle He bade him fold up his couch and carry it home. A Pharisee would rather that he had lain a night without a bed, or that he had left it behind at the risk of having it stolen: just as that Pharisee would have thought it a duty to leave the sufferer in pain till the morrow. And whilst the very genius of the institution requires the suspension of secular employ, and whilst we are far from undervaluing the bodily repose and mental renovation which the Sabbath brings, we believe that the man spends his Sabbaths best, and best commemorates the Lord of the Christian Sabbath, who is busiest in doing good. Nor are there many better ways of filling up the hours which are not employed

in worship, public or private, than with those works of mercy and ministrations to the sick and afflicted of which the Saviour set examples so significant. Not only is there the Bethesda—the hospital into whose focus disease and misery are collected—but there is many a solitary sufferer, many a bereaved or destitute family, to which, with the Bible in his hand and the love of the Saviour in his heart, the benevolent Christian might pay a friendly visit; and whilst his own spirit is quickened by all the influences of the hallowed season, and whilst theirs is solemnized by the events of Providence, not only may it be his happiness to introduce the Great Physician and the Mourner's Friend, but over the remainder of the day will spread a softer light and an intenser sacredness. Not the less "the holy of the Lord and honourable" for being bestowed on labours of love: there is no day so delightful as the day that is useful; and no week is likely to pass so serenely as the week whose first day was doubly hallowed by devotion and beneficence.

III.

NAIN: THE INTERRUPTED FUNERAL.

It was a summer day, and it was a lovely region. Along with his newly appointed attendants, the twelve Apostles, Christ had accomplished a considerable journey from Capernaum. They had reached the edge of that noble corn-field, the golden plain of Jezreel; and above them towered the copsy pyramid of Tabor—the leafiest hill in all the Holy Land. Jesus was well acquainted with the neighbourhood; for Nazareth was only a few miles distant, and perhaps He was even now renewing acquaintance with spots where, in the obscure bygone days, He had held blessed intercourse with His Father in heaven. The travellers had nearly reached a little hamlet, and were just making for the entrance, when they heard bitter cries, and knew at once that a funeral was approaching. Forthwith it issued from the gate. There was no coffin; but, wrapped in a linen shroud, all except the face, lay the body, and two bearers were carrying it along on a bier. The face was uncovered. It was the smooth forehead and sun-burnt countenance of a young man. The whole village came after. Some had torn their clothes, as a sign of their sorrow, and many were raising from time

to time a melancholy wail: but by far the most affecting sight was the chief mourner. She was the dead man's mother: and she was all alone in her sorrow. She had neither son, nor daughter, nor husband with her: for in yonder sepulchre she had already laid her husband, and on this bier now lay her only child. A pang of tenderness at once went through the Saviour's bosom—a prophetic pang—for perhaps He thought of another widow who would feel like anguish at another funeral, when they would be burying "the only son" of His own mother. "When the Lord saw her he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." And putting His hand on the bier, there was something in His aspect so majestic that the bearers instantly placed it on the ground; and as the procession was arrested and the shrieks of the mourners were suspended in astonishment, Jesus said—"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." The word was as awakening as the archangel's trumpet; for instantly he that was dead sat up: and like a man roused from a deep sleep, and whose apartment has filled with visitors during his slumber, opening his eyes he began to ask where he was. But—as if to show that the acknowledgment which He sought was a life of filial devotedness—Jesus delivered him to his mother; and, amazed at the miracle, the retinue of the Saviour and the villagers, no longer mourners, joined in exclaiming, "God hath visited his people: a great prophet is risen."

1. Death is the great destroyer of happiness. It may have chanced to you to be visiting some beautiful domain,

and when you had viewed the garden with its porticoes and terraces, and had lain for a while watching the antlered deer as they browsed beneath the oaks of the far-stretching park, you could almost have envied the possessor of this paradise—when there broke on your ear the solitary toll of a church bell, and then another and another: and looking up you saw issuing from the mansion and wending down the avenue a plumed and sable pomp, and you learned that the lord of the manor was carrying to the ancestral vault the coffin of his son and heir. Yes: it is all as beautiful as ever. You can see no cloud blot the sky. You perceive that the fountains still play, and the flowers still blossom, and the stag still crops the herbage: but if that chief mourner should notice them at all they have lost all their lifesomeness and loveliness to him. He himself still lives, and he is still the lord of this domain: but to him the landscape has died—the glory has departed. There is crape upon the lawn: a sepulchral odour is wafted from the geraniums and roses; the knell from the steeple is repeated by the lark in the firmament and the cicada in the sod; the sunshine is cruel, and the sweet season is a mockery: and he hates those steeds so jet and glossy, which pace along so proudly, and carry in the nodding hearse the hope of an ancient house, and the joy of the rich senator's old age. So with this Hebrew matron. There was hardly a sweeter hamlet in all the Holy Land. There was no spot where the crops grew ranker or richer—none where more of peace and plenty smiled. And she fancied that she had once enjoyed it all; and what enjoyment she had was more than doubled by

the society of another, whose kind word was ample compensation for many an hour's hard toil—whose faintest smile would have made fair weather in the wildest winter day. But he had died, and he was buried: and what all besides was buried in his grave it is impossible to tell—so many pleasant schemes, so many fond domestic projects; yes, the fairest part of existence was buried there, for *there* was buried all the future. But something still was left; and coming back to her cottage she did not weep alone, for her boy, in his own childish way, would lay his head on her bosom and cry, because his father would come back no more. As she rose in the sleepless night, and in the moonlight bent over his cot, many a time she blessed God for her treasure, and prayed that he might live for ever. And then as he roughened into sturdier life, at his deeper tones she sometimes started as if at the return of a dear voice; and at his wayward speeches and wilful doings she was not utterly displeased, for they reminded her of his father's ways. But that was all over now. There was no one to protect her from the people who devour widows' houses—no one to say to the desolate mourner, "Weep not." And so the cottage might be as comfortable as ever—the village might to-morrow put on its bright and busy face again—the balmy summer might float from the cool lake of Galilee to the ripe acres of Jezreel; but there was one heart which was likely to pass through the midst of it as dark as night, as dead as the sea-side stone.

And so to all of us death is the great damper. From many he has taken away the desire of their eyes, and though the

world is still full of interesting objects, they feel as if they could never be enthusiastic any more. And others he fills with continual forebodings. When they are cheerful, and just beginning to be happy, they fetch a deep sigh and relapse into pensiveness; for they remember that pleasant as this present is, by reason of death it cannot continue. And always suspecting a snake in the grass, poison in the cup; always, with bated breath and beating heart, listening to the rustle of the curtain, and expecting the assassin's footstep on the floor, this king of terrors contrives to hold them in bondage all their days. And you are ready to regret the long measure meted to the old-world fathers. You say, If I may not live always, I wish I might live as long as Adam or Methuselah. I wish we had a thousand years to come and go upon. To have all our active, zestful, enjoyable existence condensed into twenty or thirty years; in less than that time to be left a widower or a widow; to follow to the grave the child who should have long survived us; to be scarcely ever out of mourning; and, what is even a pain more exquisite, to be hardly ever that you are not solicitous for some beloved object—tremulously watching the ebb and flow of strength, the flushing and the fading of the countenance;—what matters it that this little islet of existence has many a pleasant nook, when such a flood of sorrow on every side flows round it?

2. But if Death be the great destroyer of happiness, Jesus is the destroyer of Death. At His majestic movement the bearers instinctively stood still; but it was not in that procession only that a mysterious Power and Presence were recognised; the voice which said, "Young

man, Arise," was heard as clearly in the invisible world as it was amidst that funeral company; and it was because a disembodied spirit heard that voice, and at once obeyed it, that where a dead corpse lay last moment there now leaped up a living man. To human observation it was only a common traveller who had arrived along the dusty road; but that traveller was "the Resurrection and the Life," carrying at his girdle the keys of Death and Hades; and to Him it was as easy to recall to its forsaken tenement the departed soul, as it would have been to expel from that frame a disease or a demon. Obedient to His omnipotent behest, the spirit came again; the deep sob, the heaving chest, the expanding features, the disparting lips, the flashing eye, proclaimed the presence of the Prince of Life; and a transported mother and an awe-struck multitude announced the miracle complete.

How the dead will rise, and with what bodies they will come, we cannot tell; but this we know, that of all the souls which have passed away from their mortal shrines to the world of spirits, there is not one extinct, but that all in their own places are awaiting the hour when the voice of Jesus will again unite them to a materialism which each shall recognise as his corporeal companion, the former inlet of all his knowledge, and the familiar instrument of all his doings, good or evil. "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation."

And in the meanwhile, there is a resurrection which

Jesus is effecting every day. Constantly does it happen that some soul dead in trespasses is quickened into a life of holy blessedness. There is a young man whose soul is dead. There is not in him one spark of the life of God. Like the young Galilean carried out by his sorrowing companions, he is "past feeling," and incapable of all vital action. Like the sweet landscape which was utterly lost on those sealed senses, all the precious promises, the beauties of holiness, the bright prospects of heaven, the fragrant name of Jesus, spread on every side; but this dead soul inhales nothing—this dead soul sees nothing. Like the grave-clothes that bound him, like the tomb with its stone portal which was soon to imprison him, this dead soul is tied and bound with the chain of sin, and is buried in the grave of its ungodliness; but it neither rebels at the fetters nor resents the weight of the tomb-stone. And like the unconscious clay which felt no sympathy with the weeping mother—which little surmised what sorrow its own deadness caused—and which needed to live again before it knew how much it was regretted, and how dearly it was loved—the soul dead in trespasses never dreams of that Father of spirits who bends over him a pitying eye, and who, were he now resuscitated, would exclaim, "Rejoice, for this my son was dead, and is alive again!" But the Saviour speaks the word. By some startling utterance or arresting Providence He stops the march of death—He interrupts the sad journey to the gulf of souls. "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Yes, Jesus says it—Young man, rise. The soul is quickened. Sensation comes. Sin is felt. Its

bond is burst. Perception comes. Holiness is seen to be beautiful exceedingly, and the character of God most majestic and most lovely. Vital action comes. Behold, he prays. Behold, he looks to Jesus. Hark, "he begins to speak!" He is confessing Christ before men. He is telling these young scholars about their Saviour and their souls. He is trying to prepossess for the gospel his companions and his kindred. He is ready to forsake his home, or to return and gladden it, precisely as Christ would have him do.

Where the soul is thus made living, death is effectually destroyed; for he who thus believes in Jesus shall never die. Like the primitive Church, who called the martyr's first day in heaven his birth-day, and always celebrated its return in bright apparel—if there were a family or a community, every member of which could show his title "to a mansion in the skies"—how altered would be death's aspect!—how softened the pang of parting!—how lightened the gloom of the funeral day! Then, instead of feeling ourselves like so many captives carried off by the inexorable corsair, and sent all apart to dissevered and far-distant shores, we should feel like exiles going home—like emigrants returning to their father-land; and though not permitted to return all in the same ship, yet well assured that, bound for the same port, we shall, ere long, meet in the same Father's house.

3. Observe how Jesus disposed of the resuscitated youth. It would have been natural to say, "Follow thou me." It would have been fit and proper that Jesus should have carried in His retinue this trophy of His power; and that

wherever He had gone He should have been attended by this living miracle. Nor could either the young man or his mother have grudged to their Benefactor such a sacrifice. But it was pity which prompted the interposition at first, and a generosity as graceful as it was gracious consummated this deed of mercy. "Moved with compassion," Jesus had said, "Young man, Arise;" and now that he who was dead had returned to life, Jesus "delivered him to his mother." We can little doubt that both mother and son were henceforth grateful disciples; but the form in which the Saviour desired that the young man should exhibit his gratitude was dutiful devotedness to a widowed parent. And if he had been—as we may hope—an exemplary son before, surely now when he recalled the ministrations of his own last illness; when he recollected who it was that tended him so carefully, and prepared each cordial so thoughtfully; when he remembered who it was that wiped his damp brow, and fanned the hot air, and kissed his parched lips so fondly, and, stifling her emotion, only let out the wildness of her grief when she fancied that it could no longer disturb his sealed senses; and when he thought of that recognition so resurrection-like, and of the Saviour's virtual charge, "Woman, behold thy son: Man, behold thy mother;" surely there would be a tenderness of attachment, and a minuteness of forethought, and a self-denial and self-sacrifice, in the home-life of that son, worthy of his wonderful history; and the man who, instead of preaching the gospel, received it as a charge from his Saviour to cherish his mother, would surely be a paragon of filial piety.

There is no one in this world who has stronger claims on all that is holy in sympathy, and all that is delicate in kindness, than one who is "a widow indeed;" and from the very fact, that till now she has had all the heavier cares carried, and all the rougher work done for her by another, she is often more helpless and forlorn than those who have fought life's battle single-handed. And as the time when the stroke of God has fallen heaviest on the home—as that is the time which brings the vultures together—as it is the time when accounts already discharged are sent in to be paid a second time, when sleeping law-suits are revived, when demands the most exorbitant are made on one whose broken heart can offer no resistance, and whose very tears invite them to take all: oh! it is a noble sight when, foregoing the frivolities of youth, and exhibiting a wisdom and energy beyond his years, the boy becomes the man of business, and the father's son steps forth as the mother's champion, and drives off the ghouls who threatened to devour the widow's house. Happy omen for the subsequent career of such high-hearted sons of youth, and for the comfort and honour of their own subsequent relations! Happy earnest that He who has annexed the first promise to the fifth command, and who, at Sarepta and at Nain, restored to life a widow's only son, will not forget this work of filial love! Happy household where, as with "the mother of the Gracchi," the family history includes a tale of filial heroism and maternal recompense!

Perhaps there may fall on these pages the eye of some youthful reader who has lately learned to love the Saviour;

and you are asking, What shall I render? What is there I can do to show my gratitude to Him who gave Himself for me? And possibly you have thought of some great or arduous thing—the ministry, a mission, the visitation of a district, the inauguration of a ragged school. Perhaps it may be His will that you should eventually embark in this; but, in the meanwhile, whether as a preparation for ulterior work, or as your life's entire bestowment, it is His will that you "show piety at home." You love your parents; let them know it. Give them your confidence; give them your society. Think occasionally of these two things—of what they have already done for you, and of what you now may do for them. You sometimes make them little presents. Good; but remember what the gift is for which a parent's soul most yearns: "My son, give me thine heart." However much you may be taken up with more youthful associates, let them feel that every day, as your understanding expands, and your character confirms, you love them more and more. And should the showing of that love involve some self-denial; should depression of spirits, should peculiarities of temper, should dim sight or dull hearing, should manifold infirmities or protracted feebleness impart a task-like complexion to the labour of love—behold in this a gauge of principle, a test of loyalty to your Lord in heaven. Here is your present mission; here is your immediate ministry; here is the best preparation for ulterior service, should such await you; nor need regrets surround the closing hour though life should end without a higher calling.

Dead, dead! that arm which steer'd the skiff
Through Galilee's white surf;
Lead, lead! that foot which chased the deer
O'er Tabor's bounding turf.

Beneath the rock the shepherd sings,
The turtle 's in the tree;
But neither song nor summer greets
The silent land and thee.

March, march! the pale procession swings,
With measured tramp and tread;
Woe, woe! yon gaping sepulchre
Is calling for the dead.

And bitter is the wail that weeps
The widow's only joy,
And vows to lean her broken heart
Beside her gallant boy.

Halt, halt! a hand is on the bier,
And life stirs in the shroud;
Rise, rise! and view the Man Divine
Who wakes thee 'midst the crowd.

And as the mother clasps her son
In awe-struck ecstasy,
Turn thou thine eyes to Him whose word
Is immortality.

Home, home! to make that mother glad,
And recompense her tears;
Home, home! to give that Saviour-God
This second lease of years.

And when amidst a greater crowd
Thou hear'st that voice again,
May rising saints see Jesus in
The widow's son of Nain.

IV.

GADARA: THE DEMONS EXPELLED.

EASTWARD of the Lake of Galilee lies the country that was allotted to Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. In the days of our Saviour it was inhabited by people still more degenerate, less religious, and less respectable than the Galileans themselves. From Tiberias, and the other towns on the western margin of the lake, its hills and villages looked very near; but Jesus had never visited them. However, as one region where lost sheep of the house of Israel might be looked for, it was fit that the Good Shepherd should go to this unattractive country. Accordingly, at the close of a day, when He had spoken many parables, He said to His disciples, "Let us pass over unto the other side." With no further preparation, they loosed from the shore and launched out into the deep. Fatigued with His laborious day, the Lord Jesus fell asleep. Amidst the darkness there came whirling down the opposite ravines a violent gust of wind, and as it swept the white spray before it, it smote the little craft so fiercely as almost to capsize it. But although the vessel plunged so wildly, and although the waves were dashing in, the Divine Passenger slept on. It almost seemed as if "the prince of

the power of the air" was seeking to beat back from his coast a dreaded invader; and in sublime security the Heavenly Voyager disdained to be disturbed. But though the war of elements has no power to disturb the Son of God, the cry of extremity, the wail of anguish instantly arouses Him. "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" And although ignorance and unbelief mingled with that cry, there was generosity sufficient in Jesus to attend on the instant, and before He reproved the disciples He rebuked the wind, "Peace, be still;" and instantly the drenched boatmen were skimming over a glassy sea to a near-hand landing-place.

Yet, storms in the atmosphere are only material symbols of the wilder tempests in the mind of man. Up among the cliffs that overhang the lake, and in one of the cave-like tombs into which they are hollowed, two demoniacs had been sleeping. The loud wind awoke them, and hieing forth into the blast, they capered and shouted in chorus with the hurricane; and as the grey morning showed a vessel making for the shore, the impulse of mischief bore them off to meet it. One of them was so much more remarkable than the other, that Mark and Luke notice him only. He was a strong and muscular man, of whom the other was only the shadowy satellite. Though he had been frequently caught and confined with fetters, such a fury would sometimes inspire him, that he would pull the staple from the wall, or snap the chain in sunder, and beating down the door, with wild laughter would he burst through the streets, and bound off to the wilderness again. So notorious were his strength and ferocity, that, to avoid his

haunts, passengers were fain to make a long detour, and it was only by banding together that the swineherds felt safe in his neighbourhood. And now, as in the doubtful day-spring, he came careering along, followed by his obscurer companion, huzzaing, and howling, and clanking on the rocks his broken fetters, the sight was very terrible; and from his blood-stained arms and flashing eyes, the disciples would gladly have retreated into the shelter of their ship. But Jesus went forward to meet him; and as soon as He was near enough, the demoniac fell prostrate, and exclaimed, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I conjure thee that thou torment me not." At a distance, the hope of mischief had urged the demons to the shore; but nearer hand they recognised more than a mortal man, and knowing now who the Stranger was, they besought the Son of God to let them alone. Pitying their victim, Jesus asked his name; and the answer was, half maniac, half demoniac, "Legion: for we are many." And perceiving the Saviour's purpose, the demons begged that He would not send them out of that country, or order them back into their own abyss. "If thou cast us out, send us into these swine." And instantly the whole herd ran violently over a precipice, and, being drowned in the lake, we may infer that the demons were cast out of that country, and sent back to the dreaded "deep," whence they came.

But the villagers, whom the tidings soon collected, were filled with a twofold emotion. They were greatly amazed at the change on the hapless demoniac. There he was, full of gratitude, sitting at the feet of his Deli-

verer, decently attired, and calm reason looking forth from those eyes which so long had glared with frenzy. He whom the brawniest wight among them would not have dared to face in single combat, and so savage that his name was a bugbear to all the district—so mild and gentle now that yonder mother would not fear to place her infant in his arms. How marvellous! how delightful! If they could only persuade this mighty Benefactor to tarry! If He would only take a liking for their country, or divide the year betwixt themselves and Galilee, there was no mansion in all Perea which should not be at the disposal of such an illustrious guest, and theirs would be a happy land that boasted the powerful Presence which winds and seas obey, and which "devils fear and fly." But the swine! the two thousand swine! half the wealth of Gadara! True, they ought not to have had them. They were renegades in feeding them. They felt that they could not upbraid this prophet for destroying them, and the manner of their destruction was a significant intimation that the devil at last will claim his own, and that wealth borrowed from below will sooner or later return to the abyss. "Still, property is property, and why should old Mosaic laws obstruct the trade of Gadara? Doubtless, to us it is forbidden food; but why should not Gadarenes feed swine, and accept in exchange silver sesterces from Roman soldiers?" And just in the same way as many a one would receive the Lord Jesus as a simple Pardoner, but takes alarm the moment he finds this Pardoner is also a Saviour; as many a one would make the Lord Jesus welcome, if He would only say, "Thy

sins be forgiven thee;" but looks blank when he hears it added, "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee;" as many a one at this moment would feel it his impulse to receive Christ under his roof, but would change his mind the instant he found that on the arrival of this guest, all money made by gambling, or betting, or smuggling, took wing, and every article purchased from unpaid creditors walked away; as many a one who would have accepted the gospel alongside of one favourite iniquity, when it comes to the alternative, keeps the sin, and sends away the Saviour: so these Gadarenes were so grieved at the loss of the swine, that, even although it should risk the return of the demons, they besought the Lord Jesus to depart out of their coasts.

It is impossible to read this narrative without deep compassion for the wretched sufferer, and without feeling thankful that Satan is so bound that he and his angels can thus afflict mankind no more. Much has been written on the pathology, or perhaps we should rather say on the psychology, of these demoniacal possessions—to which we have nothing to add, and which it would take too long to expound. We shall, therefore, conclude with the moral lesson deducible from the case of this unhappy man: for we think that such a lesson it was fitted and intended to convey.

Amongst this peculiar people—a people whose education was mainly carried on by types and symbols—among this people there existed a disease so singular that you are apt to fancy it must have been created mainly for

the sake of its symbolic instruction. Than leprosy, as it existed among the Jews—and among them it would seem to have been in many respects different from any disease now known—than this dire malady there could be no more expressive emblem of sin in all its loathsomeness and contagiousness and deadliness. And whether creating it on purpose or finding it already in existence, the Divine Lawgiver adopted this malady as the basis of a solemn and significant instruction, and in the Law of the Leper Jehovah wrote, most fully and most fearfully, the Natural History of Sin.

And though there is no code or commandment on the subject of demoniacs, is it a fancy altogether gratuitous or groundless to suppose that this remarkable visitation had also its religious lesson—its spiritual significance? Without insinuating that the sufferers were sinners above all that dwelt in the Holy Land, was not the infliction at once and inevitably suggestive of sin? And without saying that other ailments, corporeal and mental, were not often associated with it, could there be any calamity in itself more dismal and appalling? Was it not a solemn warning that the man who by sin makes himself Satan's vassal may soon be his victim, and that he who plays with the tempter may soon be possessed by the devil? Above all, if the disease already mentioned were an image of sin's loathsomeness and contagiousness, what could be imagined more striking than the case before us as a picture of sin's madness and misery?

For what was this man's case? He had an identity—a personality, quite distinct from the demon who possessed

him. He had a will, and the demon had a will; but the stronger will overbore the weaker one, and he was sometimes led along a helpless but not utterly unconscious captive. At other times we may suppose that the fury with which he was hurried along drove him distracted, and left him a mere blind tool in the hand of his demon master.

What an emblem of a sinful passion! A man has learned to gamble. By betting at the races, or by playing games of chance, he won a few pounds like magic; and though he lost them again, he learned to love the excitement and the luck, and ere ever he was aware, he had become an inveterate gamester. But debt and the danger of disgrace sobered him. He saw that he was playing the fool, and he resolved to stop. It was very hard, but still he was so far master of himself that he succeeded. For months he never earned an idle penny, and he never lost one. But on a bright day of May he was enticed away to Epsom, and he was tempted by the enormous odds. Or he wandered into the billiard-room and they played so badly—he could do it so much better—he took up the stick and he laid down his money, and he was growing rich as a banker, when the caprice of an ivory ball left him a beggar. Or a man has learned to tipple. Drink is his demon. He knows it: he laments it: he condemns it: he curses it: but he cannot get rid of it. Like the stag on whose shoulders the lurking leopard has dropped from the tree, he is bestrid by a rider who is lapping his life's blood, and whose clutch will not relax whether his victim seek the field or the forest. And

though, when he adverts to his flagging strength and his faltering hand—though when he looks at his wife and children, and thinks what he is doing, he execrates his frenzy, yet still he dearly loves his foe : and next pay-night he feels a sudden thirst—the contest of a weaker and a stronger will—the desire to be sober and a determination to drink—the wish to be temperate and the passion to tipple : till yielding to the stronger than he, he loses self-mastery, and comes home a howling demoniac, exceeding fierce, and a terror to all that come in his way.

And do we not see a further emblem of sin in this man's shocking abode and shameless habits ? The clothing that was given him he tore to tatters, and rather than remain in his own comfortable home, he chose to dwell amidst the corruption and putrid effluvia of the sepulchre. And although the cases are not so common where, with Byronic effrontery, men glory in their shame, where they boast how bad they are, and repeat with triumph their exploits of infamy ; yet in the case of almost all possessed with the devil there is the same predilection for the charnel-house—the same propensity for corrupt and corrupting society. Why is it that he loves such low company ? Why is it that instead of the excellent of the earth he seeks out coarse and sottish acquaintances—men with the very sight of whom you feel disgusted ? Why should he prefer that crew of villains to the pure affections and home-stead delights which invite him to his fire-side ? For the same reason that to his own cottage the demoniac preferred a tomb. He is not himself. He

is the slave of some lust or passion, and is led captive by it at its will. That tyrant lust, that master-passion, cannot live in a holy atmosphere; and therefore it hurries its victim away to the foul scenes and rank atmosphere which constitute its vital air.

We may believe, however, that it was with this man as with many in the like condition. Indeed, some circumstances would indicate as much; namely, that now and then he caught a glimpse of his actual state, and his darkened mind was visited by glimmerings of remorse and regret. As he sat in his cave, beneath the moonlight, and watched the great bats fluttering out and in, or heard the hyæna sniffing and cranching among the bones of the dead; as he viewed the furniture of his strange abode—the torn shrouds and the orbless skulls piled here and there—he marvelled what had brought him to that Golgotha. "I will arise, and go unto mine house;" and for a while he almost thanked the friendly force which manacled his hands and reft him of the power of mischief. Yet even there he was not at home. The house was swept and garnished, but the demoniac's mind was empty. No good angel had taken up his residence, and seven devils entering in hurried him off to his old scenes, and made his latter end worse than the first. And any one who is the victim of a sinful passion, can easily recall visitations of horror and fits of reform. You were disgusted at yourself. You felt more foolish—more brutish than any man; you were a beast—a madman in your own eyes—and you vowed that at any hazard you would begin a better life; you would have even thanked, as a welcome

violence, any one who would have bound you with chains, so as to keep you back from your besetting sin. And you laid bands on yourself. You made promises and resolutions. You told the entire case to some friend and begged that he would help you, that he would watch you and warn you; and yet again you fell. You played the fool as formerly. You were mad at yourself. Like Legion cutting himself with stones, you could almost kill yourself. You punished yourself by all sorts of penances. You would eat no pleasant bread. You almost envied the austerities, the privations, and the prisons of the Papist. But the unclean spirit had regained possession; you were presently as besotted as ever; and the Bacchanalian ditty or the demoniac laugh, startling the peaceful night, announced that Legion was gone back to the tombs.

Yes, hapless man, these sinful passions are exceeding fierce. But though no man can bind them; nay, though ofttimes bound with chains, they will break the fetters; though no man can bind them, Jesus can expel them. Entreat His pity. Cast yourself under His protection. Not only do the storms and winds obey Him, but the very devils are subject to Him. Fling yourself at His feet, and implore His compassion. Not only will He cast forth the unclean spirit, but He will effectually preclude its return. He will put His Holy Spirit within you, and that Divine Occupant will make you so happy at home, that you will not need to wander through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. The sweetness of new and holy tastes will take the zest from old and evil

habits; and, not only clothed and in your right mind, not only reformed and respectable, but renewed and made spiritual, like Legion now passing his forsaken dwelling amidst the tombs, far from being tempted to return, you will only view your former companions with pity, your former haunts with amazement and horror. Like this ragged scholar at the feet of Jesus,—like this reclaimed demoniac in the society of the Saviour,—you will find that your Divine Teacher is well able to fit you for the fellowship of the saints, and that He is One who will never suffer you to depart from Him till you are ready to be taken home to His own abode of peace, and love, and purity.

V.

THE DESERT NEAR BETHSAIDA: THE MULTITUDE FED.

ACTING on the instructions of their Lord, the twelve had completed a perambulation of the Galilean villages, and had now returned from preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing many of their diseases—a sort of trial-trip or experimental tour by which their Master, whilst yet with them, sought to train them for that work which was soon to be the business of their lives. But now that they had returned to the rendezvous, it was just that season when the whole population was streaming along the thoroughfares—journeying up to the feast at Jerusalem; and as repose was impossible in the midst of so many visitors, Jesus said to His travel-worn companions, "Let us go into a desert place and rest awhile."

But there was another reason. Tidings had arrived of the death of John the Baptist; and, in the present haunted state of the tetrarch's conscience—ready to scare at every spectre, and rendered unscrupulous by his desperate guilt—the least commotion in Galilee might be followed by fearful severities; whilst the recoil of popular feeling from a tyrant so sanguinary might precipitate a step which was altogether to be deprecated, and lead them to proclaim

Jesus their king. And, as His time was not yet come, Jesus retreated from this risk of commotion, and withdrew into a distant solitude.

But why should we scruple to add as another possible element in the Saviour's retirement, the solemn musings awakened by the death of the Baptist? John was the kinsman of Jesus. He had spent his life in the service of Messiah; and now he had fallen the first of His martyrs. And although, so far as John was concerned, there could only be joy at his entrance into the heavenly blessedness, his cruel fate was but an earnest of what awaited Christ's faithful witnesses in this evil world. With such a prospect, was it right to go on with the gospel? Was it worthy of the mild and merciful Jesus to persist in a plan which was thus unsheathing a new sword in the world, which was evidently kindling a new fire in the earth? For it really amounted to this. If Jesus carried through His enterprise, He could even then foresee the fearful amount of human suffering it involved —the thousands—nay, myriads—whom it should consign to dungeons and galleys—the multitudes who should be tortured to death by agonies too fearful to contemplate—the millions whom attachment to Himself should subject to privation and exile, to poverty and pain. And in the survey of all that mournful multitude—the mighty army of martyrs, crucified, impaled, beheaded, sawn in sunder, hurled over the cliffs of Piedmont, drowned in the frozen lakes of Holland, roasted in the fires of Spain, shot on the moors of Scotland, buried alive in Italian prisons—in surveying all that host of secondary martyrs, their out-

lawed orphans and broken-hearted widows, was it humane, was it right in the Prophet of Nazareth to persist with a system so fraught with sorrow? Instead of retiring to the desert, would it not be better to return to that heaven whence He came, and leave the world to its own tranquil tenor?

But to leave the world to its tranquil tenor would have been to leave it to perdition. It would have been to leave it, not a world of mingled good and evil, but a world of triumphant wickedness. It would have been to leave it, not a world of righteous sufferers and unrighteous oppressors, but a world of warring fiends; a world where, like Indian savages torturing one another, both the martyrs and their murderers would have been alike brutal and unlovely. To make it a better world, it was needful that some should suffer; to make it a world more true, more holy, more devout, it was essential that some should be so holy, so truthful, so devout, that the rest could not tolerate them: in other words, bad as men now are, the only cure is that some Abels should be so good that the Cains cannot endure them. And if the martyr's pains are sharp, they are also short; and his momentary cross is followed by an everlasting crown. And whilst for himself he wins the snowy robe and the immortal palm, for the world he earns its true tranquillity. The sufferer for a great principle is a saviour of society; and the sufferer for the gospel is a benefactor to mankind. And, therefore, foreseeing all the "great fight of afflictions" that awaited His affectionate followers; beholding in this dark deed of Herod the first of a long series of atrocities; but

also foreseeing how, from the ashes of every pile would spring hundreds of happy converts, and thousands of Christian homes; across the Red Sea of martyrdom, descrying the only path to the world's Land of Promise; and with His own mind made up to be Himself the next who should ford its gulf of sorrow—the Saviour did not retrace His steps: but now that the herald was slain, and with His thoughts constantly travelling to that ensanguined dungeon where John had finished his testimony, the Prince of Peace Himself took up the topic, and discoursed to eager listeners "concerning the kingdom of God."[1]

For, betwixt the fame of His wonders, and the avidity to hear His words, it was not long till the solitary place became a vast conventicle. And as from the eminence where they sate Jesus looked down and saw the streams of pilgrims flowing in from every northern path, adverting to the unpeopled character of that upland region, He said to Philip, who was a native of the place,[2] "Whence shall we buy bread, that they may eat?" and Philip's answer indicated that, even if the shops of Bethsaida could furnish a sufficient supply, it would cost all the money they had amongst them to feed such a multitude. "Knowing what he would do," and touched with the case of a people who had neither a good prince to rule them nor kind pastors to teach them, Jesus neither resented the invasion of his retirement, nor sought a more secluded resting-place, but devoted the day to these "sheep without a shepherd." Such of them as needed healing, He cured

[1] Luke ix. 11. [2] John vi. 5.

of their diseases; and to all of them He discoursed at length on the things of the kingdom. But at last the apostles grew uneasy. The shadows were lengthening, and night would soon enclose them. So they went up to their Master, and said, "This is a desert place, and now the day is far passed; send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat." Jesus said, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." Like Philip, thinking how a single meal to such a company would exhaust their capital, the two hundred pence which was probably the sum then in their common purse, they answered, "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?" He replied, "How many loaves have ye? go and see." Andrew reported, "There is a lad here who hath five barley loaves and two little fishes; but what are these among so many?" But just as if it were ample provision, Jesus bade them bring it; and in the meanwhile, He directed the disciples to arrange the crowd, seating them fifty in a row, and facing one another, so that the entire concourse was disposed in some fifty groups of a hundred each. And when all were ready, Jesus took the loaves and fishes, and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He thanked the Giver of all good. How strange to see Him standing with these barley cakes in one hand, and these two small fishes in the other, whilst the hungry multitude were waiting for a meal! And yet how like the position of Israel's tented million, when there was not a handful of corn in all the camp, but heaven was about to rain the bread of angels at every door! And

now, breaking up the loaves, He handed them to the disciples; and passing down the several ranges, the disciples distributed to all the five thousand guests, and repeated the same process with the fishes, till "they did all eat, and were filled." Then, when the hunger of each was satisfied, Jesus said to the disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost;" and making another tour of the company, each disciple filled his basket, so that not only was the bread so multiplied that the small loaves, which could scarcely have sufficed one little family, feasted several thousands; but the manifold wonder was crowned when the broken pieces so far exceeded the original supply.

This is one of a few miracles which benefited a large multitude at once. A solitary paralytic—"a few sick folk"—two demoniacs—ten lepers—it was usually on single sufferers or little groups that the beneficence of the Saviour was expended. But here, as on a similar occasion subsequently, not units but thousands came in for a share in His great liberality. And though the gratitude of a multitude is seldom so intense as the gratitude of an individual or a family; though even in the case of the ten lepers the sense of obligation was so diluted that only one of the ten felt constrained to thank his benefactor; or, to take the highest of all illustrations—that mercy which extends to millions—though few feel so grateful for that widely-shared blessing, salvation, as to say, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift:" yet still, wide reaching blessings are the way of the Most High, and gifts which gladden thousands are godlike.

And although it may be true that the bosoms in which the mercy of Jesus lingered most tenderly were such as blind Bartimeus and the widow of Nain, Simon's wife's mother and the sisters of Lazarus, still it was fitting that some signs and wonders should be scattered more broadcast, and that a palpable proof should be given, that if any distress still lingered among the millions of mankind, it was not because there was not present a Power able to heal them. Accordingly, such as had need of healing He cured of their diseases, and, along with all the rest, regaled them with a banquet, the product of immediate and manifest omnipotence.

VI.

THE SEA OF GALILEE: THE TEMPEST STILLED.

CHRIST had fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. The miracle, in connexion with His discourses, at once suggested to the multitude that lawgiver who fed the fathers with manna in the desert, and they began to whisper their surmise to one another, till the rumour ran, "Verily, this is THAT PROPHET who is to come into the world." Like unto Moses, like the great lawgiver in his prodigies, and like him in his peerless revelations of the mind of God, and coming at the predicted conjuncture, why should they defer any longer? Instead of the besotted and imbecile Herod, and as a deliverer from the modern Pharaoh, the taskmaster Roman, why should they not obey the indications of Providence, and install at once as their monarch a Prophet whose hand was a horn of plenty, and His lips a lively oracle?

Jesus knew their thoughts, and He deprecated such procedure. To be king of the Jews was to Him no ambition; and a popular rising, a tumultuary proclamation of a rival prince, would only bring misery on His kindred, the obscure descendants of David, and furnish a pretext to His priestly enemies. Christ's kingdom was not of

this world; and up to the last week of his mortal life—up to the time of that procession from Jericho to Jerusalem, when the pent-up enthusiasm of years burst forth in "hosannas to the Son of David"—He never permitted any demonstration which might either alarm the rulers or compromise His apostles. And as He could see the movement in the concourse, and as He knew that the populace would have abettors, all too eager, in His own disciples—in the men who panted for high places in the coming kingdom—"he constrained his disciples to get into a ship," and go before Him to Bethsaida; whilst, relieved of their presence, He himself undertook to dismiss the multitude.

Soon was the encampment broken up, and, with thankful acknowledgments on the one side, and kind and gentle parting counsels on the other, the crowd melted away. The last stragglers had rounded the shoulder of the hill; and yonder pinnace on the lake would be the boat with the twelve. All was growing silent and cool; and as Jesus sat in the solitude and gazed on the flattened grass, where His guests had lately dined, and where the birds of the air now came for their banquet, the curtain of darkness spread over the scene. But He himself did not withdraw. In order to find the society He wished, there was no need that He should go to Bethsaida. Already in that solitary place His Father was present, and Jesus designed to spend the night-watches in communion and converse with Him. But whilst from that river of pleasures He was regaling His weary spirit, and fortifying His soul for further toils and trials, already the night wind sighed in

the mountain glen, and loud gusts roaring down the gorge announced what a wild time the voyagers would be finding on the water. But it was not till long after midnight that Jesus went to join them. Bending on their oars, and exerting all their strength, they had made only three or four miles against the blast, when their practised eye espied an object approaching from the shore. No ship, no osprey skimming with outspread wings,—now hid behind a lofty billow, now poising on its crest—it must surely be a spirit, the guardian angel of the lake, or some phantom from the unseen world; and as they dropped their oars, a cry of consternation reached the mysterious pilgrim, now plainly a human figure, and who looked as if he were passing by.[1] Instantly, however, and not desiring to practise on their fears, Jesus exclaimed, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." In the nearness, and in the lull of the tempest, Peter was sure it was the Master; and starting up, he called out, "Lord, if it be thou, command me to come to thee on the water." Whilst, doubtless, designed as a tribute to his Master's might, possibly a certain measure of curiosity and vanity might mingle with the offer, and Peter might feel, "I, too, would like to do as much: I wonder if I, too, could tread the sea." And as Jesus bade him "come," he vaulted from the vessel's edge; but possibly just then a squall struck up, and as in a moment Peter realized his predicament—the black gulf below, and the angry waves all round—he rued his rashness; a panic seized him; the liquid pavement yielded, and in the cold abyss he would

[1] Mark vi. 48; Matt. xiv. 22, 23.

have settled down, had not an outstretched hand forthwith met his cry of terror, and raised him to the surface, and borne him up the vessel's side. That instant the wind ceased; and the grateful voyagers came and worshipped Jesus, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God:" and just as yester evening the miraculous feast had made them believers, but in the interval the storm had anew made them infidels, so once more they yielded to their amazement, and felt as if their faith could never fail them again.

An incident which shows the fugacity of our convictions: how faint and fleeting are our strongest impressions. Perhaps the disciples were a little mortified at being sent on shipboard, when they expected in a few minutes to hear their Master proclaimed King of Israel; but whatever might be their feeling, they had come away direct from a wonderful scene—a scene quite as wonderful as if their Master had bidden the firmament open and rain loaves on the multitude. They could hardly help feeling, what even the strangers felt, that this was "the Prophet," in very deed the Son of God, as they themselves had often hailed Him. But the wind fell contrary. They had to haul down the yard, and fold away the sail; and, weary as they were, they must needs get out the oars and take to rowing. This made them cross and sullen, and haply, in some hearts, the thought was rising, Could not this man who gave these strangers such a feast, have given his own servants fair weather? At all events, they were not so favoured as on a former voyage. There was no Jesus asleep in the hinder part of the ship, whom they could go and awaken, with

the demand, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" That of itself was perplexing. Their previous perils He had always shared, and out of them all delivered them; but this time there was no hope from that quarter, for in quitting the solitary place, they had taken the only vessel with them: and now they felt very disheartened and forlorn, and thought it quite possible they might perish, and their Master far away.

A fluctuation of feeling which happens constantly. Reading some work of Christian evidence, you felt so certain that the saying is faithful, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," that you said to yourself, That point is settled: that fact is history: by that conclusion I abide for ever. But by and by, in some cold sophistical society, among cavilling acquaintances, your mind was unhinged or your soul was frost-bitten; there was no longer the same point and precision in the proof; or you exemplified, what we so often see, the difference between the fact that is firm and the heart that is fixed. Or, when in distress about your soul, you took up the Bible, and you were directed to some gospel with Heaven's sunshine beaming over it, and you said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases;" and you resolved that, whatever you might hereafter forget, you would never forget the good-will of God and the merits of Immanuel—that, whatever else you might doubt, you would never question the amplitude of the atonement and the security of the sinner who pleads it. You had found a pearl of great price, and silent tears or outspoken thanks proclaimed your happiness. But you

fell asleep on some enchanted ground, and woke up to find that your treasure was gone: you came in from life's coarse avocations and found that the gem in your signet had dropped out whilst you dredged in the ditch or moiled in the quarry. In the softness of an idle life, or the secularity of a busy one; more likely still, through some sinful step or guilty connivance, you lost the blessedness you spake of; and when sober or anxious moments came again, you could neither see the gospel so true, nor the Saviour so gracious, as you had seen them heretofore. Or in some auspicious season you were so moved and melted by the goodness of the Lord—you stood so astonished at some singular interposition, some miraculous feast or opportune mercy—that you felt you could never be diffident or desponding any more. But anon the barrel of meal was failing; difficulties were thickening around you: a tempest was rising, and like the disciples sent into the midst of a storm when they hoped to see a coronation—like them you consider not the miracle of the loaves, for your heart is hardened. You are so mortified and so miserable that you begin to ask, Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? And it is perhaps more than you can do to keep from calumniating the ways of Providence, and charging God foolishly.

The truth is, there is in us no feeling permanently good except what is put there and kept there by God Himself. To a sinless being, the thing unnatural is to doubt the goodness and the truth of God: to a sinful being, it is hard to believe in the benevolence toward himself of a holy God—it is hard to believe in God at all. And though strength

of evidence—though stress of argument may sometimes make us fancy that we are thoroughly convinced—though a brilliant presentation of the truth, or a striking Providence may intensify our indolent assent into a transient assurance or fervid emotion, in order to sustain the right feeling, nothing less will suffice than a constant interposition of God's own Spirit, who alone can conquer into a habitual dependence on God our carnal enmity.

For the presence of that Comforter—for the calm and continuous convictions which He imparts—let us ever pray; and whilst the men whom Moses, and the prophets, and a Saviour risen from the dead, cannot convince—whilst they keep ever repeating, "Rabbi, shew us another sign"—be ours the apostles' wiser petition, "Lord, increase our faith." Whilst the morbid appetite for marvels keeps ever crying, "Give, give," let us, as we gaze on the marvels, covet earnestly that best gift, a sincere and docile spirit—a purged and open eye. Equally remote from that scepticism which forgets what a few hours ago its own hands were handling, and that superstition which descries a phantom more readily than a living Saviour, let us pray for that faith which, lulling the storm in the mariner, will leave us no longer so many Reubens, "unstable as water," and who can never "prevail." Let us pray for that faith which, stilling the fears and fancies that tumultuate through our own soul, will leave a great calm, in the midst of which we may fall down and worship the Son of God.

Again: The experience of Peter shows us the distinction betwixt faith and physical courage—the difference.

some would say, betwixt faith and forwardness. There was no occasion for Peter to adventure on the deep. In a few moments the Master would have been on board. But the apostle felt an impulse—the same generous sort of impulse which, after his Lord's resurrection, espying Jesus on the shore, would not wait till the vessel was worked to land, but bounded over the side and swam. He felt an impulse, and betwixt his eagerness and his wish to walk on the water, he volunteered to come to Jesus. But no sooner did he feel the cold waves swinging beneath the soles of his feet, and perceive the breakers curling on every side, than his courage froze, and he gave himself up for a drowning man. Perhaps there were in the same ship men of less courage but more faith. Had Jesus said to John, "Come to me on the water," most likely John would have obeyed, and scarce been conscious of the warring elements. Nay, we could conceive a disciple there, so timid, so nervous and fearful, that he could only envy Peter's valour: and yet had Jesus called to him, we could imagine that shaking reed complying, and achieving in safety the feat which proved too hard for Simon.

Yet we are very apt to confound with Christian faith the forwardness of a precipitate spirit, or the fervour of a bold one. But, without disparaging firm nerves, and without deprecating the frankness which is affectionate and not officious, there is a great difference betwixt a brisk spirit or a brave animal on the one side, and a devout believer on the other. The advantage is all with the latter. And if, in looking to the future, you some-

times fear, "I do not know how I shall ever surmount that trial: I tremble at the prospect of that ordeal: it is like passing through fire and through water: I do not think I can bear that pain. How I envy such a one's hardy frame, or such another's heroic temper: but as for me I am a worm, and no man:" if that consciousness of weakness shut you up to all-sufficiency, you will be more than conqueror. The temptation will be fully vanquished when the Saviour fights the battle for you. The affliction will be light when the everlasting arms are carrying at once the burden and the burden-bearer. The pain will be easily borne when Jesus lends you His own strength to bear it in. Faith is modest. It is not rash and ultroneous. It does not volunteer a promenade on the flood, or a flight through the firmament; but there is might in its modesty, and when the occasion arrives, it knows that the feet of the petrel or the wings of the eagle shall not be wanting. It knows that Christ honours the faith which honours Himself; and if it be from Himself that the invitation is issued, it will not scruple to exchange at His command the firm deck for the liquid wave, or even to tread the sea of death in the stormiest night, if thus alone it may arrive in His presence.

Then, again, the whole incident lets out much of the mind and manner of our Lord. The multitudes He sent away, and in a little while they would be fast asleep, and dreaming of a golden age, with its wonderful banquets and royal feastings, and the Son of David reigning over them. But for neither Himself nor His apostles was any sleep designed that night. He spent it praying: and

without intruding into that retirement, from which even James and John were sent away—without venturing to say what were the topics of the Mediator's intercessions on that and similar nights—we need not hesitate to say that the world is indebted to them till this hour, and will be more indebted by and by. Like the obedience which He was daily rendering, and like the sacrifice which He was soon to offer, these prayers of the Son of God were piacular and grace-procuring. Like precious pledges left in a distant territory, they are a sign that the place will be revisited, and that God has not done with a race whose Divine Representative endured and asked so much. These prayers of the Saviour, so full of loyalty to God and of benevolence towards His human brethren, are cords of love which link the planet to the throne of God, and are earnests of a day when the heathen shall be Christ's heritage, and the utmost parts of the earth His possession; and notwithstanding all the fearful amount of sin which cries to heaven for vengeance, so long as one of these prayers offered on the hills of Galilee remains unanswered, the world is indestructible. "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." The whole of these mercy-germs must spring up and ripen, before the great harvest of the earth is reaped.

But whilst the Saviour was praying, His apostles were toiling in rowing. Whilst He was holding congenial converse with His Father in heaven, they were maintaining a deadly struggle with the wind and the waves. And does it not seem somewhat hard that the friends of Jesus should share neither the slumbers of the multitude

nor the devotions of their Master? Is it not hard that, whilst the five thousand are in their beds, and whilst their Lord is in the Mount, they should be sent alone into the heart of the storm and the dangers of the deep? So, standing on the summit of an Alpine cliff, and looking down to the rocky table where for weeks the eaglets have been regaled with food fetched from the valley, it seems harsh and hardly parental when the eagle shoves her fledgelings over the face of the cliff, and, with ineffectual fluttering, they plunge down through the dizzy air, and would be dashed to pieces did not a lightning wing intercept their descent, and bear them back again to the eyrie.[1] The Saviour was training His apostles. He was educating them for a life in which cold and hunger, weariness and watching, and the perils of the deep, should be no small ingredient, but where faith in Himself, where the assurance of His perpetual presence and unchanging love, should be their constant recourse. And see by what beautiful gradations He taught them the lesson. See by what progressive steps He inured them to that life of calmness in peril and joy in distress. First of all, He embarks with them, but so far secludes Himself from their approach. He lays His weary head on a pillow, and when the squall bursts on the lake He still continues to sleep, and they scarcely like to arouse Him. But as

[1] "He will not have them to be clinging only to the sense of his bodily presence,—as ivy, needing always an outward support,—but as hardy forest trees which can brave a blast; and this time he puts them forth into the danger alone, even as some loving mother-bird thrusts her fledgelings from the nest, that they may find their own wings and learn to use them."—Trench on the *Parables*.

wave after wave dashes over the deck, and already the craft rolls in the water, they exclaim, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" and, mildly arising, He looks out on the tempest, and says, "Peace, be still;" and, as the petulant billows hide their heads, with magic speed across the willing lake the vessel glides into her haven. But this time He secludes Himself from their approach more effectually. Instead of shutting Himself up in slumber, He shuts Himself out of the ship altogether, and sends them to sea alone. They felt it hard. They feared they were forgotten. And it was not till He stepped into the ship, and the wind ceased, that they felt how unjust were their murmurings, and knew that, though miles lay between, every stroke of the oar, and every strain of the timbers, and every stress of the tempest, was marked by their Master far away. And thus were they gradually prepared for such scenes as the close of the apostolic history so vividly describes—scenes where Christ's realized presence gave the sublimity of a commander, and, had He chosen, would have secured the honours of a demigod to a captive disciple—scenes where, no small tempest lying on it, and the water-logged vessel drifting, not on an inland lake, but over the wild Mediterranean, secure in his Master's presence, the Hebrew prisoner paced the deck, the only cheerful passenger, and soldiers and sailors, centurion and captain, were fain to take their orders from one whom faith in an unseen Saviour had suddenly revealed as a king of men.

VII.

THE FAME OF JESUS: SUCCESSFUL INTERCESSION.

In the old time and in the Holy Land, on the shores of a beautiful lake, stood a straggling village. Some of its houses belonged to farmers and shepherds, and some of them were fishermen's huts. But tall above the rest rose a nobleman's mansion. Its owner was a friend of the king,[1] and often went to the palace. He had one son whom he tenderly loved, and who, we dare say, he hoped would grow up to be a favourite at court, as well as the heir of his own wealth and titles. Like the other boys of Capernaum, no doubt the little noble had often sailed his mimic boat on the edge of Gennesaret, and explored the haunts of the conies and rock-pigeons up among the hills. But he was struck by a mortal sickness. His limbs shook and burned in the fever, and he could hardly lift his head from the pillow. His father got the best advice, but the doctors could do him no good. The great house was already beginning to wear that awe-struck aspect which a house puts on when it expects a visit from the king of terrors; and when neighbours inquired for the little lord,

[1] From the term in the original it would appear that the nobleman held some office at court.

it was always the same answer, "He is not any better." The father saw him getting worse. Every time that he stole into the dim chamber and stood over the young sufferer, it was a more languid smile which returned his greeting—it was a weaker and hotter little hand he grasped in his. Even the sanguine father ceased to hope, and, as he paced the hushed apartments, the bow and quiver and other neglected toys of the poor patient began to look like relics. Their owner would never handle them any more.

At this time, however, a wondrous rumour spread rapidly through all the Holy Land. A prophet had appeared, so mighty and so good that many thought him Messiah. Some of the nobleman's neighbours had lately seen Him at Jerusalem, and they could tell what prodigies He had wrought, and what heavenly words He had spoken. A thought crossed the anxious parent's mind. Perhaps, like another Elisha, this great prophet could heal his dying child. But, to so great a prophet would it be sufficiently respectful to send a mere messenger? And what if that messenger should linger by the way, or should somehow mismanage the business? Yes, he would go himself. He would take another glimpse of the dear child, and then set out for Cana.

As he posted the thirty miles, through budding vineyards and green fields, many a thought rose in his bosom: a wonder whether this great prophet were indeed the Christ—a wonder if he were still at Cana—a wonder if he could be persuaded to undertake such a distant expedition—a wonder if even this would avail. Still, he felt

as if he were carrying in his arms his dying boy, and the burden at his heart gave speed and perseverance to his feet. Noon was just past, and the villagers were reposing after their mid-day meal, when the pilgrim espied in the valley the peaceful hamlet, the goal of his anxious journey. Its wonderful guest had not yet departed, and, without any introduction, the agitated father at once accosted him: "Sir, come down, and heal my son; for he is at the point of death." Already, with their morbid appetite for the marvellous, some of the Galileans had gathered around him; for Jesus answered, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." The suppliant did not argue the point. Doubtless, he felt the reproof was well-merited; but, with the urgency of agonized affection, he only repeated his prayer, "Sir, come down, ere my son die." There is One who giveth liberally and upbraideth not; and the Man of Sorrows was not the man who would upbraid a breaking heart. With the look of one who wills and it is done, and in a tone of tender assurance, Jesus instantly answered, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." In that sympathizing look the father recognised omnipotence; in that gentle voice he owned the Almighty fiat: and, convinced that all was well, the pilgrim resumed the road to Capernaum. The voice of the turtle was heard in the land, and on his homeward way his singing heart re-echoed the music of spring. To the eye of his faith, his son was again in health and gleesome vigour; to the same eye, Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God: and, earnest of the new life in his dwelling, he felt a new life in his soul. Nor did he need to wait till next day restored him to his man-

sion; for here, along the road, come the joyful servants to tell the news already known so well. "Thy son liveth." "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him." Yes, at one in the afternoon, and when the anguish-stricken father had been a day's march distant, interceding with Jesus, the fever vanished. It was not that the patient revived; it was not that his ebbing strength had rallied; it was not that the disease had taken a turn; but it had absolutely gone away. The fever left him, and the lad was well. Oh, happy father! oh, kind and mighty Jesus!

The servants told their master about his son, and now he told them about the Saviour. They had heard much concerning Jesus already, and now in their gladness they believed it all. As Messiah, and as all which He claimed to be, they hailed their wondrous benefactor. It was a believing family. The father believed, and so did his recovered son, and so did these kind-hearted servants Sickness left the house, and salvation came to it. And, although usually they were "the common people" who heard Him most gladly, among the first-fruits of the Saviour's ministry were a Hebrew noble and his family.

Two years passed on, and this beneficent career was near its ending. The same sweet season had returned, when new leaves are on the tree and twittering broods are in the nest, and all the Holy Land was moving towards Jerusalem. But from the stream of pilgrims Jesus and His disciples fell aside. To escape the double danger of priestly intrigues, and a tumultuary coronation on the part of the people, the Saviour retired to the furthest

limit of the country, and spent a little while on the border of Tyre and Sidon.

Thither the fame of His wonders had already penetrated from the neighbouring Galilee. In the general mind it had only awakened surprise or curiosity; but there was one poor woman who heard it with intensest interest. She was not one of the favoured people. She was not by descent a daughter of Abraham. She belonged to that brisk and busy nation whose bold argosies used to fetch tin from our own Albion, and whose pushing traders had colonized Tyre, Carthage, Corinth, Syracuse, and nearly all the mighty marts of the Mediterranean. But the Phœnicians were pagans. They worshipped marble statues of Jupiter and Mars, and other old heroes, and to the Jews they were peculiarly obnoxious as the descendants of Canaan, the worst progeny of Ham. Happily for herself, however, this Syrophœnician lived on the confines of the Holy Land, and she heard the fame of Jesus. She knew the Hebrew expectation of Messiah, and there were circumstances which quickened her acuteness, and which enabled her to identify the Son of David sooner than many of His own compatriots.

She had a young daughter. No doubt she had set great store on the little girl, and had been cheered through all her wakeful nights and toiling days by the hope of what she was yet to be. But the hope was blasted. How it came about we do not know; but an evil spirit, or demon, had entered into her child. There could hardly be a more terrible trial. Just when the fond mother was anticipating a companion and a helper in the growing strength and

intelligence of her daughter, to have her loved one torn away in the grasp of a fiend—her reason frustrated, her better will overborne, her conscience in vain reclaiming—it was a fearful affliction, a daily sword in that poor mother's soul, and to any physician or exorcist who could have given her again her child she would not have grudged her house full of silver.

Just then, however, she heard of one who was able. For two years in the adjacent Galilee Jesus had been healing "all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those who were possessed with devils," and "his fame went throughout all Syria."[1] It had reached the abode of this disconsolate mother, and now that a kind Providence had brought the Great Physician into her immediate neighbourhood, she hastened to consult him.

There is in faith a sound logic, just as in earnestness there is a deep divination. From the "fame" of Jesus the Canaanite mother drew her own conclusions. She inferred that to one endowed with such virtue there must be great delight in exercising it, and that even her case as an alien would not put her beyond its reach; and accordingly her mind was made up to throw herself on His mercy, and take no refusal. And just as her conclusion was sound, so her alertness was eager and her penetration was keen. The Saviour's sojourn was short. He had come into that region incognito. He courted retirement, and instead of preaching in the villages He "entered into a house and would have no man know it." But there is no ear so sensitive as maternal solicitude, and although

[1] Matt. iv. 24.

few in that countryside were conscious of the presence which now ennobled their borders, this grief-worn mother caught the sound of His feet, and made prophetic music of their beautiful goings. Through some friendly informant apprised of His coming, she soon learned His retreat, and rushed to His presence. It did not matter that everything looked unpropitious—that disciples dissuaded her entering—that they represented that for the time being there was a pause in His miracles, and that she must not trouble the Master. Nor did it matter that the Saviour sat silent, and seemed almost to reprove her intrusion. Her heart was sharper than the eye of apostles, and whilst they interpreted the cold look of their Master as a hint to send her away, under that cold look the Spirit of God somehow assured her she would yet find a welcome. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Such was her vehement adjuration, as, with clasped hands and on bended knees, she lay at His feet; but those that watched His countenance saw in it none of the accustomed compassion; and as, without answering her a single word, He slowly rose and moved forth into the open air, and resumed the road towards Galilee,[1] there seemed an end of hope, and the disciples fancied that, like themselves, their Lord regarded her as a heathen dog, on whom the children's bread must not be wasted. Callous and case-hardened

[1] Such is the impression left on our minds by the narrative. From Mark (vii. 24, 25) we gather that He was in the house and wishing to be "hid," when the woman first fell at His feet. From Matthew (xv. 23-29) He appears to have been on the road, and "departing thence," when He spoke the wished-for word.

with that worldliness in which the best of men are more or less incrusted, they did not mind her tears, and they did not permit themselves to realize the misery condensed into the bitter cry, "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." No; to them she was not a mother praying for her child, but only a troublesome petitioner—a foreigner—a heathen—an accursed Canaanite. But though they had no sympathy with the suppliant, they were tired of her importunity, and they wished to put an end to the "scene." Heartlessly enough they said to their Lord, "Send her away, for she keeps crying after us." And, speaking out their thoughts, He first said to them, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and to her, "It is not fit to take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs." "Truth, Lord," she answered, looking up from the ground, on which she had again prostrated herself—"truth, Lord," as much as to say, "Yes, call us dogs. Ignorant, outcast, impure, we idolaters deserve no better name." "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." "An atom of that gracious power—a mere morsel of that mercy which has made so many blessed homes in Palestine, would make of me a happy mother; and thou art too generons to grudge that crumb." The point was reached at which the Saviour had all along been aiming. By this striking instance, as in the case of the Centurion, He had showed the apostles how God can create in Gentile minds a firmer faith than Israel's, and had thus prepared them for that day not distant when it would be their vocation to take Heaven's bread and distribute it to heathen "dogs." The point was reached,

and no sooner was this answer uttered than, like the mask falling from the face of Joseph, the "strangeness" fled from the face of Jesus, and the loving-kindness, long suppressed, burst through. "O woman, great is thy faith! For this saying, go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." The suppliant had all her desire; the disciples received a lesson; the blessed Jesus tasted once more His own joy-creating luxury,—the delight of doing good. Hasting to her home, the thankful mother felt none of those shadows thickening round her which of late had so often saddened her approach. No haggard figure darted from the door, and rushed off towards the forest. No young fury met her steps in rage and frenzy, uttering wild invectives. But, as she lifted the latch and looked in, there lay on the couch a slight and peaceful form,—her little daughter as of yore, in calm and holy slumber. The devil was gone out, and though the rage of his departure had left the poor young patient spent and weary, he would come back no more; and as soon as those pale eyelids opened, "the light of other days" beamed forth on the enraptured mother. The Son of David had shown mercy. From that very hour the damsel was made whole, and doubtless, if they lived so long, amongst those who "were first called Christians" in the neighbouring Antioch would be herself and her fond mother.

Miracles of this kind we do not expect at present. Their purpose has been served. They authenticated at the time the Heavenly Messenger. They roused the stupid multitude. But the course of things is resumed

once more; and as the exigencies of this probationary disciplinary state require that we should have always with us the sick and the suffering, as well as the poor and the needy, so we do not feel entitled to expect a repetition of those gracious interpositions which so often startled an incredulous neighbourhood, and which prepossessed towards the Great Evangelist the pensioners of the Great Almoner and the patients of the Great Physician. It would disorganize society, and would go far to put an end to industry, humanity, and forethought, if hunger could always reckon on miraculous loaves, and if disease and pain could always count on a supernatural cure. But although, from the necessities of the case, the prodigies have ceased, the Man of Mercies lives, and that "gospel of the kingdom" for which He bespoke a welcome by "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people"—for that gospel He is as solicitous to gain each heart amongst ourselves as He was to gain the ear of Palestine.

Let us covet earnestly the best gifts—better gifts than bodily cures and temporal boons. Let us covet those gifts which Jesus is ascended a Prince and a Saviour to bestow. Let us covet those gifts for contempt of which the Holy Land was, in the long-run, so little the better of that Divine Visitant with whose fame for a season it resounded. Let us covet the remission of our sins and the sweet sense of reconciliation with God. Let us covet a meek, lowly, and obedient mind, a contrite spirit, and a tender conscience. Let us covet a holy disposition, and a soul turned heavenwards. Let us covet that great gift, the

Holy Ghost the Comforter. These are the blessings included in the gospel of the kingdom; and in seeking them for ourselves and for others, let us see what light the incidents now reviewed cast on the mind of the Saviour.

1. We see the honour which He puts upon Faith. It was their faith which brought both the nobleman and the Syrophenician to the Saviour, and it was their faith which carried back the blessing. So is it still. Christ honours the faith which honours Himself and His Father. And if any one asks, "How is it that I don't get on? I have no assurance of God's love. I have no comfort in my religion. I gain no ground against my besetting sin. I have little enjoyment in prayer, in ordinances, in the Word of God:" the answer is, "You don't get on because you don't go to Jesus. You have more faith in disciples than you have in the Master; nay, you have more faith in yourself than you have in the Saviour." But it is only the Lord Jesus who can really do you good. You cannot save, and you cannot sanctify yourself. Christian friends cannot give you assurance. Ministers cannot say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." But Jesus can. He has all power in heaven and on earth. Believe this, and act as if you believed it. Go to Him; and even if at first He should seem not to regard—though He should answer you not a word—though the first answer should be discouraging, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—though it should be suggested, "You are none of the elect, you are none of Christ's sheep, you are none of God's children, you are a dog"—be not discouraged.

Think of whom you are addressing. Think how much more love there is in the heart of the Saviour than in the best of His disciples; and as sure as you persevere, and as sure as there is mercy in the Son of David, at last He will say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

2. We see the honour which Christ puts upon natural affection. Many of the sick whom Jesus healed could not come to Him. He went to them, or friends brought them to Him. But in the two instances now considered, it would seem that even this was impracticable. The dying youth could not be moved; the demoniac would probably have offered every resistance. And yet, in a certain sense, they *were* brought to Jesus. In the arms of faith and affection their parents brought them; and, although casual observation noticed nothing, the all-seeing Saviour saw the burden with which they were heavy laden. As the nobleman entered, Jesus saw next his heart a dying son; as the Canaanite entered and sank to the ground, He saw that it was her afflicted child who dragged the poor mother to the dust; and although in the one case He let it forth at once, and in the other concealed it for a season, in either case He was instantly moved with compassion. The father's love, the mother's yearning, in conjunction with their great faith, at once took hold of Immanuel's sympathy, and, as effectually as if the sufferers had come themselves, brought to His lips the word of healing.

We can no more shut grief from our dwelling than from our world; and the dearer the relation the sorer is the pang. It is very sad to see the roses wither, to feel the

thin palm so hot and dry, and mark the life's slow ebbing. And it is sad when the nursing and the watching are ended—when the cheerful gleams and the patient endurance alike are over—when there is no more wheeling out into the mellow autumn afternoon—no more carrying up and down stairs—no more favourite chapters read—no more hymns repeated—no more tender, solemn talk of Jesus and the New Jerusalem;—it is sad to see the little daughter in the coffin. But far sadder was the case of this poor mother. She had still beside her the self-same form. Yes, indeed, this was the very babe that once she dandled—the little one whose first lispings were such a wonder and delight—the little Syrian maid who felt so proud to pace beside her mother, hand in hand, to the village well, and then, in all the importance of infant womanhood, so gravely guarded the cradle of a lesser one. But, oh, how changed! So rebellious and intractable—so malignant and mischievous—so fearfully possessed by the devil. Happy neighbour, who have laid your little damsel in the grave. And yet far happier both the mother of the dead and the mother of the demoniac than the mother of the reprobate. Happy those in whose cup if there is bitter sorrow there is not also burning shame, and who, in the day of their sore calamity, are spared the agony of crime. The body may be in the grave, and the spirit be in paradise—the soul may be the haunt of an unwelcome demon, and at last, emancipated from the irksome thraldom, may be a bright and exulting angel before the throne. But for depravity—for lost innocence—for guilt—for this grief of griefs, is there any balm in Gilead?

For this sorrow, surpassing death, can the Physician there prescribe?

He can. And these incidents teach us that the best thing which affection can do for its objects is to carry their case to the Saviour. You have a child or dear relation who is like to bring your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. And what are you to do? It seems as if nothing could stop him in his wild career. He seems as if he could not stop himself. He really looks as if he were possessed with the devil. You have got good people to talk to him, and you have talked to him yourself. But it was of no use. He did not stop his ears; but as for giving you any hold on his heart, his will, you might as well have been a thousand miles away—as for giving you any admission into his real self, it would have been all the same if he had been at the antipodes. And now you have entirely lost sight of him. You know not where he is; and what are you to do? Why, this: You have heard "the fame" of Jesus. Go to him, and take your child, your husband, your lost friend with you. Take him, that is, as the nobleman and the woman took their child. Take him in the arms of believing and importunate intercession. "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me; for my beloved one is grievously vexed with a devil. He is the enemy of God, and of his own soul. He is the slave of divers lusts and passions. Thou knowest our frame. Thou knowest the affection I feel for him. Thou knowest the faith I have in thee. O that Ishmael may live before Thee! O that this wanderer may be restored —this madman brought to his right mind! I know not

where he is: at this very moment Thou compassest his path, and art acquainted with all his ways. And although he were here, he could effectually exclude me from his soul's sanctuary—from that mysterious shrine where sits alone and inaccessible the hidden man of the heart: but even at this moment, Thou who hast the key of David canst open for Thyself that door; even now his heart is in Thy hand. Oh, speak the word, and add a heaven to my heaven—a jewel to Thy crown!"

DISCOURSES.

I. MESSIAH'S MANIFESTO.

It was still early in the Saviour's ministry. Only a few months had elapsed since He commenced His miracles at Cana—since He changed the water into wine, and restored to health the ruler's son. It was only a short time since He had preached the gospel to Nicodemus and to the woman of Samaria; but although He had held many interviews with friends and inquirers, and had spoken in many synagogues, He had not yet given any general or public exposition of His object and design. If He were "the Prophet," He had not unfolded His message. If He were Messiah, He had not yet explained the nature of that kingdom which He had come to set up.

The occasion had now arrived. He had completed an extensive circuit of Galilee, during which He had come in contact with great numbers of people, and had healed all the sick who were brought to Him. His fame spread "throughout Syria," and, now that He had returned to the shores of Gennesaret, He found Himself surrounded by an expectant multitude. From the edge of the lake,

with its fresh clear water and its pebbly margin, He moved towards a neighbouring eminence. The crowd followed, and on reaching the top of a little hill Jesus sat down. James and John, Peter and Andrew, and other disciples drew near Him, and the general audience covered the platform beyond.

We can picture the scene: The little hill with its two terminal knolls or low horn-like hummocks, and the level space between. At the base of one of these knolls, the wonderful Teacher—the possible Messiah—about to open His commission—His countenance almost youthful; not yet "marred" by the career of hardship and sorrow on which He had entered, and in the eyes of many among His hearers still radiant with the beauty of beneficence—that lustre it wore when He restored health to themselves, or reason to their friends. Most of the audience are Galileans—boatmen from the lake, little traders from the towns, rustics from the fields and vineyards—but mingled with them a few of the wilder boors from the other side, a few of the carefully attired and more vivacious citizens from Jerusalem. Straight before them, in silvery fulness, spreads the Sea of Galilee—its nearer margin fringed with palms, its waters only ruffled by the creaking oar, or splashed up for a moment by the swooping pelican. Southward soars into the horizon Tabor, with its copsy dome; and, though most of the hamlets are hid in dells and valleys, yonder is a white village which has climbed the steep, and which arrests the spectator's eye—"a city set on a hill." It is autumn. Perhaps already light clouds fleck the firmament, harbingers of the early rain;

and from their rocky retreats in the adjacent ravine flights of doves have come forth to seek that food which careworn man must gather into barns. And now that all is leisure and silence—from no elevation except the height of His own intrinsic majesty, and with no barrier round Him except His own secluding sanctity—the Speaker opens His mouth and begins. He begins, and the music of His voice and the glow of His countenance, as well as the first word He pronounces, are each an utterance of the "blessedness" within, which He would fain transfuse through all that listening throng.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

To many in that audience each beatitude was a paradox. "Happy is that rich man who holds his head so high," would be the thought of many; but Jesus says, "Happy is that self-conscious man who knows himself a spiritual pauper. He will welcome the true riches, and on his lowly down-drooped head, as God's Prophet, I pour the consecrating oil, and anoint him as a king." And others think, "Happy are those joyous spirits. Happy is that festive party. Happy are those merry-makers, who have

always summer in their blood and sunshine in their looks, and who are able to forget both past and future." But Jesus says, "Happy are the serious. Happy those whose conscience is tender, and who have found in sin a source of sincere and profound affliction. Soon will the last tear be wiped from their faces." Many envy the hero. Fain would you set your foot on the neck of the Roman, and once more claim this goodly land as your own. "But," says Jesus, "the meek man is the hero. His foot is on the neck of vindictiveness, envy, and those terrible passions which are tyrants worse than the Romans. As my disciple, become your own master, and at once your empire is larger than Cæsar's. Be meek, be patient, be contented, be a child of God, and God's world is your estate, the earth is your inheritance." Not that you are to have no aspirations, no ambition; but "covet earnestly the best gifts." Hunger after righteousness.

But it is not easy to paint the rainbow: it is a vain attempt to analyse the breath of June. Of these benedictions, as of the discourse which follows, so deep is the meaning, and so Divine the charm, that it is only the Holy Spirit, taking the things of Jesus, who can convey them fully into a mortal mind. No wonder that their perusal has been the means of prepossessing for the gospel numbers of both Jews and heathen; and no wonder that the fairest and best informed of modern philosophers has said, "Of their transcendent excellence, I can find no words to express my admiration and reverence. At the close, the Divine speaker rises to the summit of moral sublimity. 'Blessed are they who are persecuted for

righteousness' sake.' For a moment, O Teacher blessed, I taste the unspeakable delight of feeling myself to be better. I feel, as in the days of my youth, that hunger and thirst after righteousness, which long habits of infirmity and the low concerns of the world have contributed to extinguish." [1]

They are the preamble to a discourse, in many respects the most remarkable which even revelation has preserved. That discourse is the manifesto of Messiah. It is a proclamation of the sort of empire which He had come to set up in this evil world. It is a description of that kingdom of God which consists in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and which Jesus sought to establish in the souls of men. It is not the gospel; but it is a survey of that territory to which the gospel is the gate. It is not "Believe and live;" but it is a description of that existence which believers ought to live. And to a thoughtful man who is beginning to tire of viewing vanity, who is sickened at the world's heartlessness, or who is revolting from the husks which the swine do eat, we can imagine nothing more opportune or more arousing than the blessedness of a true piety as here depicted; nothing more fitted to make him ask, How shall I ascend this hill of God? How may I get up to the pure air and bright prospects of this Mount of Blessing? How may I acquire that character which Heavenly Wisdom has here signalized by such great and precious benedictions?

As has been already stated, this discourse was delivered early in the Saviour's ministry. It was uttered just when

[1] *Life of Sir James Mackintosh*, vol. ii. p. 125.

it was desirable to give both His first followers and the Jews in general an accurate idea of His object and mission; so that the former might know what their Master expected from them, and that the latter might know what they should expect from Messiah. And this twofold purpose was admirably answered by the mode in which the address was adapted to the audience. That audience consisted of an inner and an outer circle. Close around their Master were collected the disciples; beyond them, but still within hearing, was a promiscuous congregation. It was to the disciples that Jesus directed His speech; but it was to disciples in the audience of the multitude. And, therefore, whilst the whole of the sermon is primarily spoken to His personal friends, nearly the whole of it bears obliquely on the bystanders. Every beatitude is not only a congratulation to the Christian, but a warning, a sort of sorrowful and reluctant woe, to the self-excluded worldling. Every exhortation to disciples, "Be not as the hypocrites," was not only a direction how to pray, and fast, and give alms aright; but it was fitted to startle those who felt in their conscience that in describing the hypocrite the Speaker was describing themselves. And then at the close, when He proceeded to point out the wide gate and the narrow, and described the foolish builder and the wise one, we can imagine Him raising His eyes towards the remoter rows of listeners, and leaving on their especial ear the solemn and emphatic conclusion.

Assuming that it was the twofold object of this discourse to teach the disciples what their Master expected in them, and to teach the Jews what they ought to expect

from Messiah, it is most instructive to observe the Divine skill with which both ends are accomplished, or rather with which the one is accomplished by means of the other. After His benign and beautiful introduction, the Speaker enunciates what may be deemed the text or main topic, —"Ye are the salt of the earth: ye are the light of the world:" and then describing the sort of light which Christians should shed and the sort of influence which Christians should exert, He sketches both negatively and positively the great features of the New Testament kingdom. It was no part of His plan to supersede the Moral Law, or to proclaim a saturnalia, during which every one should do that which was good in his own eyes. He had come not to cancel the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil the precepts of the one, even as He fulfilled the predictions of the other. Nay, so far was He from lowering the Divine requirements or loosening moral obligation, that He goes on to instance two great standards of ethics which in His kingdom would be utterly worthless,—the one, the teaching of the Scribes; the other, the practice of the Pharisees. To His immediate hearers nothing could be more startling. "If only two men shall be saved," was their proverb, "the one must be a Scribe, and the other a Pharisee." But to constitute a worthy member of Messiah's kingdom, Jesus shows that their obedience must be more broad than the one, and their motive more pure than the other. To restrict the sixth command to actual murder, and allow all malice in the heart, is no morality; and to give money to the poor and say prayers to God, for the sake of man's applause, is no religion. Then, after

contrasting the spontaneous and heart-sprung ethics of the Christian with the stinted and external compliance of the rubricist and rule-monger, as well as with the ostentatious exploits of the formalist, He reverts to the main topic again, and shows that it is by laying up treasure in heaven—by maintaining a single eye to God's glory—by casting off all carking anxiety, and trusting to Him who feeds the raven and clothes the lily—by cultivating strictness of judgment each towards himself, and charity towards others—by making known all their desires to God, as to a Father wise and loving—and by doing to others as they would that men should do to them—that they are to evince themselves Christ's disciples, and pour a saving light upon the world, a sanctifying influence on society.

Such is a brief outline of this wonderful discourse. Regarded merely as an effusion of didactic eloquence, it is unsurpassed. No passage inspired or uninspired can equal for brevity and fulness the affectionate breathings of its exhaustless prayer; and it would be better never to have been born than to be able to read its opening beatitudes without impulse or emotion. Where shall we find words so plain and yet so touching as these, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them? Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Where-

fore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And when did a sermon ever end with a peroration so natural yet so noble, —an image so obvious yet so stately and impressive? "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

The Speaker came with no pompous equipage. He did not alight from a splendid chariot, nor was He attended to His place by the *élite* of Palestine or any train of learned or brilliant supporters. Neither coronet nor mitre glittered on His brow, nor halo shone from His head. The sky did not mutter, the mountain did not quake; no trumpet was sounded; no note of preparation was heard. But the great Teacher sat down; and as the audience clustered round—like pearls from a horn of plenty—like the musical pulses of morning on the great harp of Memnon —blessing followed blessing, till He swept the whole diapason of goodness. Then, after this exquisite prelude, He passed on to unfold His heavenly ethics, in terms so simple that the boor of Naphthali wondered at his own

intelligence, and yet so saintly, so celestial, that the dullest ear was awed, and the vilest for a moment felt the charm of virtue. And what made the wonder all the greater, was the ancient and familiar source from which those lessons so new and beautiful were taken. The discourse was avowedly based on an older law, and was designed to expound precepts given long ago, and yet the world contains no contribution to ethics so novel and unique. Like so many dingy nodules which from time immemorial have lain about on the village green, disregarded by the ignorant or heedless inhabitants, till at last a lapidary comes and splits them open, and in the heart of each reveals a nest of radiant gems,—the ten commandments had been preserved among the Hebrews as something precious, but rather as palladiums or charms than as wealth available for their several homes, till, one by one, Jesus took them, and with His "I say unto you" laid open each separate precept, and showed how rich it was in hidden jewels, and how, turned to right account, it might have introduced into their own abodes much of the wealth of heaven. Like the seeds and bulbs which travellers sometimes carry home, in the wilderness of Sinai the Israelites had gathered up and conveyed to their own land many right statutes and good judgments; but, like the dry germs in the traveller's cupboard, the law slumbered a dead letter in the ark of the synagogue, till—"lo! I come"—Jesus came and hid it in His heart. Watered by the Holy Spirit, given without measure to the second Adam, these seeds of goodness quickened in this congenial soil, and after thirty years of fostering in

Nazareth, were in full blossom planted out on the Mount of Beatitudes; and when the murmur of admiration rose, "Whence hath this man this doctrine?" He told them that He had found it in the decalogue. The germs of all these graces were the dry seeds which they themselves had fetched home from the barren crags of Horeb. He had hid them in His heart, and now preached their righteousness in the great congregation.

It was a marvellous sermon; and as in the induction of the Speaker's sanctity the listeners felt for the instant weaned from sin—as in the example of the Speaker Himself they saw how august and lovely true devotion is—as under the momentary spell they could fancy themselves ennobled and uplifted, and already ushered on that better life in whose majestic panorama they were moving—they were loath to end the delicious trance, and grieved when the glorious lesson ended. Like bees hovering round the honeycomb, "when he came down from the mountain great multitudes followed him"—and just as the shepherds felt when the heavens closed and the angels fell silent, when Jesus ended, the people were astonished. The doctrine and the tone were new. It was not the hearsay of the elders, nor the quibble of the scribes—it was the voice of the oracle, it was the deliverance of a teacher come from God. No wonder that they marvelled; for on that hill-side they had heard a sermon the like of which their fathers even did not hear at Sinai. They had heard a sermon which was to be the text of a new dispensation, and whose fulness of meaning no sage of this world, no seraph of the other, shall ever be able to exhaust. They

had heard a lecture on ethics, the symmetry and elevation of which were only surpassed by the Speaker's living example. They had heard a lesson as to God's fatherliness and fond interest in His children's affairs, such as no one could speak with authority save the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and who on this occasion declared Him.

II.

A SAVIOUR'S FAREWELL.

Of the recorded discourses of our Lord, the two longest are the Sermon on the Mount, and His Address to the Disciples in the guest-chamber on that night when He was betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Between these discourses two years and a half had intervened[1]—years filled up as never was any similar term of human history. During that interval the Lord Jesus had been the source of countless benefits to the land of His sojourn. Betwixt the lost senses which He had restored to many, and the many whom He had cured of direful diseases; betwixt the demons whom He had expelled, and the dead whom He had raised to life, there was not a single mourner or sufferer on whose behalf the interposition of the Man of Mercies had been sought by Himself or His friends, who had not reason to remember Him with affectionate gratitude. But there were others who were His debtors still more deeply. There were many whose spiritual diseases He had healed, many whom He had raised from the grave of sensuality, and given them the life of God in their souls. And if there

[1] The Sermon on the Mount, Mr. Greswell assigns to September, A.D. 27; the Farewell Discourse to April 4, A.D. 30.

be greater wonders, there is no mercy greater than this. To a soul sunk in corruption—apathetic as a clod, ignorant of God, destitute of all pure and holy aspirations, a mere assemblage of divers lusts and passions—to such a soul to impart acute moral sensitiveness, an adoring loyalty to the Most High, an avidity for truth and goodness, and thus to fit it for a glorious immortality, is a greater boon than a resurrection to natural life a thousand times repeated. But that boon the Saviour was conferring on some one almost every day; and, rendering its cheating publicans honest and humane, its hollow Pharisees genuine and devout, its flagitious transgressors pure in heart and blameless in all holy conversation, He was leaving in that Holy Land numbers who, when He came to it, were so foul as to be only fit for destruction, but who, through His own benignant treatment and the Holy Spirit's transforming, have long since gone to be the companions of angels. And, over and above, not a day elapsed throughout these thirty months when He was not living that life, uttering those words, radiating that influence, and achieving that work, of which we reap the priceless results to-day—of which the Divine perfections then revealed and vindicated shall reap the honour through eternity.

And now it was all but ended. To-night He would say "Farewell" to His friends; to-morrow, to His work He would say, "It is finished."

That mountain of Galilee and this guest-chamber in Jerusalem mark two important eras in the history of discipleship. Until Jesus opened His mouth and said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom

of heaven," it is likely the apostles hoped that the kingdom would consist in wealth and victory, in crowns and posts of honour: but the announcement of that hour went far to dissipate the delusion: for it was then plainly and authoritatively proclaimed, that God's empire is spiritual; that the king among men is the man who by the completest subjection to God has obtained the greatest mastery over himself; and that his is the blessed life, not who has the most gold in his coffers, but the most good feelings in his heart—not who has the greatest number of retainers to whom he says, "Do this," and "Go thither," but the greatest number of neighbours and acquaintances whom he blesses by his gracious deeds and benevolent prayers—not who has a palace for his abode, but who, having God for his Father, enjoys constant access to the King of kings. Never did warrior or statesman more distinctly explain his object than the Captain of Salvation then unfolded His mission. And, although the means by which it was to be attained were not yet so fully made known, there need have been no doubt from that day forward as to the Saviour's aim. A victory for righteousness—the expulsion from this world of all that is false, cruel, diabolic—the enthronement of the living God in the heart of every living man—the founding of a kingdom of truth, peace, and devotion, which should at last be universal—the empire of God upon earth,—a mark no less sublime than this was pointed at on the Mount of Beatitudes when the Heavenly King unfurled His standard and invited all comers to gather round it.

At first scarce able to realize this, in the delightful

society of their Master the disciples were beginning to recover from the dislocation of old ideas and the unhingement of old hopes, when they were staggered by a new disclosure. Hard as it was to give up "the kingdom for Israel" and their own promotion, so blessed is it to be continually doing good, and so inspiring was the companionship of Jesus, that we may easily concede that a little longer and they would have been joyfully following their Leader in His world-bettering, sin-vanquishing campaign. But here was a new and stunning surprise. Their Leader was about to leave them: their Master was about to die! And if to earthly aspirations there were a check and a bitter disappointment on the Mount of Beatitudes, to their holiest affections and dearest hopes there was a sickening shock in the consummation which they could now conceal from themselves no longer. The former bend in their journey up the hill of discipleship had brought them out on a prospect sufficiently blank and dispiriting; and as they saw the crowns and sceptres vanish over the verge and disappear, and turning their eyes, as He had lately turned His own, from the kingdoms of this world and all their glory, as their Master bade them mount higher they felt a pang, and for long kept up an inward protest. But now, this second bend—this higher landing-place—what is this which it discloses? Oh, horror of all horrors! A gallows-tree! a death of infamy! a cross, and their Master on it! large as life, and close at hand, their Master's cross, and in the misty background crosses for themselves! Truly it was with bitter herbs that on the eve of such a blood-stained morrow they ate their pass-

over; and although they knew that it was of no use now to say, "Master, spare thyself," no wonder that, as with cold and tremulous fingers they passed round the broken bread and raised to their pallid lips the prophetic cup, their Master could interpret the silence and the anxious looks of His already bereaved and orphan family.

He saw, and He sympathized, and, as was His wont, postponing His own more urgent case, He proceeded to comfort them.

But that discourse, who can expound? This adieu, as Divine as it is tender—this "farewell gleam of the Sun of Righteousness, tearfully smiling ere He plunged into the dark thunder-clouds waiting to receive Him"[1]—these parting counsels of a Saviour beneath the cross—how is it possible to translate into our weak words, or transfer to our coarse canvas? From the opening utterance, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me," down to that unprecedented prayer in which the Great High Priest allowed disciples for once to overhear such intercession as He still offers within the veil, the whole is fitter to be pondered in the still seclusion of a communion eve, or read over in the house of mourning, or whispered in the ear of the pilgrim on the banks of Jordan, than made the subject of our hard analytic handling.

The essence of the gospel is God's love. The incarnation was God's love coming forth from the viewless, and tabernacling palpably in the midst of men. The atonement was God's love providing a satisfaction to God's justice, and making it as consistent with His rectitude as

[1] Brown Patterson.

it is delightful to His benevolence to pardon the sin and restore and renew the sinner. The New Testament dispensation is God's love, so to speak, organized and acting through various institutions and ordinances—gently visiting us in Sabbaths with their hallowed calm, their tranquillizing repose, their touching remembrances—more emphatically appealing in sacraments, with their solemn messages and Divine sanctions and pledges—articulate in the written Word and its great and precious promises—diffused around us in Christian society and its softening influences—penetrating our very souls in the solicitations of the blessed Spirit, who, as God's great heart of love, keeps moving, throbbing, yearning in every faithful saying to which we listen, and in every earnest prayer to which the feeblest saint gives utterance in the name of Jesus, and in communion with God. And this farewell address is, so to speak, a final effort of Incarnate Love to drown the remaining coldness and felt sinfulness and faint-heartedness of disciples in that confidence Godwards which, of all things, is the most sanctifying and sin-subduing, the most fortifying against hardships, the most animating to deeds of endurance and valour.

From His baptism at Jordan to this verge of Gethsemane, Jesus had lived in the uninterrupted smile of His Father. From the moment that heaven opened, and there came from the excellent glory a voice, "This is my beloved Son," down to this moment, when His soul was soon to be sorrowful, even unto death—He had never once forgotten that God was His Father, and that He was the Father's dear Son; but His whole career was over-canopied and

brightened by this soul-gladdening assurance. Travelling in the greatness of His strength, or rather, we may say, in the loftiness of His stature, the sod was often cold and wintry to His feet, He trod on many a thorn, and again and again felt the envenomed serpent at His heel. But above time's clouds and earth's harsh weather the heavens were open, and God was love; and although His steps were often through rugged paths and painful, it was in a pavilion of constant peace and brightness overhead that He ever looked forth and moved onward. And now He said to disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "Come up into my own pavilion. Submit to have your weak souls carried in a Saviour's strong arms. In the world ye shall have tribulation. That world hates me—it will hate you. It has hurt me all it could—it will hurt you more. But where I am, all is serenity, sunshine, peace. Keep near me, believe what I say, and the love with which the Father loved Me will include and environ you; and as I am about to take my last step out of the world, so be of good cheer, your tribulation will soon be ended also: your last step erelong will be taken, your Father's house will be gained."

Delightful as it would be to dwell on that great legacy of peace, and that great promise of the Comforter which this memorable sermon included, we must pass away from it, leaving most of its topics untouched. But as "life and immortality" are so special a distinction of the gospel revelation, we may be permitted to meditate a little on

that suggestive name which the Saviour here gives to the future residence of His people—"My Father's House."

THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: . . . I go to prepare a place for you."

THE present state is a state of discipline, and part of that discipline consists in the limits of our knowledge. Some knowledge we have lost, and some we never had the means of gaining. And among other subjects of inquiry none can be more interesting than the future abode of our immortal selves, and the mode in which we are to reach it. For instance, many would have felt it a satisfaction had the Saviour told us the precise region of the universe which is to be the residence of His ransomed, so that looking out on the starry firmament, we might have been able to fix on the moon or some planet, and say, "Yonder it is. Yonder is the world to which the spirits of my fathers have already gone, and to which erelong I myself am going." And many would have liked to know more precisely the manner in which the transit is effected. Is it an angel guard which convoys the spirit home? Or does the Lord Jesus receive it direct? And how does that disembodied spirit hold intercourse with its glorified companions? and, in the absence of all material organization, how does it perform the acts ascribed to it in the glimpses of the better country which the Bible gives? And on all

these points it would have been a great enjoyment to possess clear and assuring information. But on these points the only book which could have solved our queries is silent. Thomas did say to Jesus, "How can we know the way?" and Jesus answered, "I am the Way." Instead of telling how the transit is effected from the clay tabernacle to the house eternal, the Saviour virtually said, "Leave it to me. I shall see to it, that where I myself am, there my disciples shall also be. See you to it that your souls are safe in my keeping now, and when the time arrives I shall see to it that they are safely brought home to my presence." And in the same way in regard to the place. Christ could have told. He had come from it, and was soon going back. He knew all regarding it, and could have superseded a world of speculation by simply naming it. "Is it a planet of our system? Is it the sun's own orb? Is it some fixed star? or some region so remote that no twinkle of its glory can reach these outskirts of immensity? Or is it here? Is it within our world's own confines? Coincident with our old and evil earth—as it were, simultaneous and superimposed upon it, like the atmosphere of vapour which fills our atmosphere of air, and the atmosphere of electricity which fills them both, impalpable to our gross senses—are there a new heaven and a new earth already here? On the site of some busy Babel, where all is smoke and din and vanity, has there already come down the New Jerusalem, bright and happy as a bride adorned for her husband? And in the very scenes where we plod through leafless forests, and gaze on torrents brown with winter and its decomposing vegeta-

tion, do happier beings gather fruit from the tree of life, and wander along the banks of the crystal river? Are heaven and earth so near that, although ten or twenty years have severed me from a sainted sire or a believing sister, there is not a league of space between us?—so near that, to bring the soul and the Saviour together, it only needs the breaking down of a dark partition, and, absent from the body, I am present with the Lord?" On all these matters the Saviour was silent; but just as all curious questionings as to the transit were dismissed by His own sufficient assurance, "I am the Way," so all surmisings as to the place are superseded by His telling us that it is the Father's house, the Saviour's home.

"I adore the fulness of Scripture," said Luther; and the devout student has reason to add, "I adore its reserve." Every saying is significant; but there is also significance in its silence. On the subjects now hinted it could have been copious; it has chosen to say little. And that silence, what does it say? Leave secret things to the Lord, but attend you to those that are patent and practical. Make you salvation sure, and that salvation will make you sure of heaven. Be you a child of God, and the Father will take you in due time to the Father's house.

The expression, as we ponder it, suggests—

1. Home Education. We are apt to fancy that on the glorified spirit knowledge is at once to burst in its fullest flood, and inundate the soul with immediate and boundless information. But this is not the analogy of God's pro-

cedure. Doubtless, from the moment of entering the world of light, the soul will be raised above the clouds of error—above prejudice and ignorant prepossession; but it will be the work of a whole eternity to go forward along the vistas of ever-widening inquiry, and come forth into landing-places of ever larger and ever wealthier revelation. And just as betwixt the vastest finite understanding and Omniscience there exists the interval of a whole infinitude, so we can easily perceive how to the soaring celestial there is room for boundless aspirings, as stage by stage and platform by platform he mounts, and still finds that it is but the lowest step to the all-surveying throne—the Alpha of that science where no created mind can reach the Omega. But just as a kind father takes care that under his eye his children learn what is likely to do them most good, so it will at once be the instinct of these heavenly alumni and the care of their Father, that they learn the most excellent knowledge. Much of the knowledge for whose poor grains we tug and strain with ant-like industry in our present state, is of little intrinsic value. As one confesses who had amassed an enormous library, and gleaned a huge amount of rare and curious information: "After all, knowledge is not the first thing needful. Provided we can get contentedly through the world and to heaven at last, the sum of knowledge we may collect on the way is more infinitely insignificant than I like to acknowledge in my own heart."[1] But of the knowledge which we acquire under the tuition of the Comforter, and of that knowledge where God Himself is

[1] Southey's *Life*, vi. 192.

the subject, it is impossible to possess too much. And such is the knowledge of the glorified. God Himself is known. Not comprehended—but apprehended:—much of His procedure understood, none of His perfections misunderstood. The plan of redemption is made plain, and the grace of Immanuel is made so manifest, that it will be almost a regret of the glorified that it was not sooner realized—that they did not trust His tenderness more, and resort to His atonement more habitually and more joyfully. And the mystery of Providence is made plain: and, like one who has been conducted through a tangled forest by some skilful guide, and who is often tempted to strike out near paths or smooth paths for himself, but who at last, emerging from the thicket and looking down from some lofty eminence on the leafy wilderness, concedes his conductor's skill; so, escaped from the thicket of this world's toils and trials, and looking down from the hills of immortality on the way by which the Lord has led us—that road which we often thought so round-about, and often felt so rugged—how affecting and surprising to see that it was the only right way—the only way that would have brought us *thither!* "That tempting avenue past which I was so roughly hurried, had I entered on it I must have been bemired in worldly lusts, and might have been plunged into perdition. That grassy opening, which I so preferred to the path through pricking thorns, would have led me to the lion's den. And that near-cut, as I deemed it, would have given me the whole journey to retrace. The rough way turns out to be the only right way." And so, extending to all the events of mortal life,

the story of nations as well as men, there will be no end to the wise counsel and wonderful working of Jehovah, as recorded by the historians of the skies. And then

> "How great to mingle amities
> With all the sons of reason, wherever born,
> Howe'er endow'd! to live free citizens
> Of universal nature!
> To call heaven's rich unfathomable mines
> Our own! to rise in science as in bliss,
> Initiate in the secrets of the skies!
> To read creation—read its mighty plan
> In open vision of the Deity!
> To see all cloud, all shadow, blown remote,
> And know no mystery, but that of love Divine!"

"Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we are known."

2. The Father's house suggests Holiness. A person may be constrained to live in a bad neighbourhood; but he will not let bad neighbours live in his house. David lived in a time of great depravity, and Palestine was full of deceitful, dishonest, and violent men: but, setting up house for himself, the monarch said, "I will suffer no wicked thing before mine eyes. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." And so, in filling up His great house on high, our heavenly Father has laid down that rule, Holiness becometh my house for ever, and without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And He has perfect power to

enforce that ordinance. Nothing that defileth or worketh abomination shall ever cross His palace gates; or, in Rutherford's homely words, "No unclean dog shall ever set foot in the fair streets of the New Jerusalem." And, what is more wonderful still, if ourselves are admitted, even when we go in no sin shall enter. Washed and made white and purified, redeeming blood and the renewing Spirit will secure that heaven shall be holy whosoever he be that enters there. This makes it so good to be there. This should make us so thankful when we have reason to hope that friends of our own are there. Like Jesus, "they have gone into the holy place." Sometimes, when you send a child away from home, you have fears and misgivings. He is gone to be with good people; but even there you cannot be sure what company he may sometimes encounter. But gone to the Father's house, you are sure he is safe. There, there is nothing to hurt or destroy; and there he will have no company but what will do him good. And, looking forward to the place, if you have got that new nature to which sin is the sorest burden and sanctity the sweetest luxury, how pleasant the thought, that in a little while you shall be done with evil! Yet a little while, and I shall have sinned my last sin. Yet a little while, and I shall have prayed my last wandering prayer, and kept my last cold communion. Yet a little while, and even from me the Ever-Blessed shall receive praise without murmuring, and love without alloy. Yet a little while, and temptation cannot touch me, and even if Satan could come he would find nothing in me. Yet a little while, and I shall be in the

climes of purity, in the home of goodness—in that native land of excellence to which, if not all the talent and all the learning, at least all the piety and all the virtue, of the universe are tending,—as every particle of vital air returns to the atmosphere, as every drop of rain will again be found in the ocean.

3. The Father's house suggests the Father's presence. This world is not the Father's house; but it is the school in which He has some of His children training for glory. A severe school to many of them, where they have often bread of affliction and tears in great measure—a severe school, where some of the tutors appointed by the great Teacher are stern masters, and where the lessons are hard to learn. And what makes the Gymnasium of Meshech so dreary is, not only the bad companions, but the rareness of the Father's visits. God is a stranger in this world, and it is not often that even His own children are cheered by His conscious presence.

> "But there they see His face,
> And never, never sin;
> And from the rivers of His grace
> Drink endless pleasures in."

Here believers often complain that they cannot get access to their God. They try to pray, but feel as if He did not regard. They cry in the night season, but He heareth not. But there, there is no withdrawment of His presence, no hiding of His face, no frown, no forsaking: but all is perennial peace—for they are made exceeding glad with the light of His countenance for evermore.

4. The Father's house suggests the Family;—not only

the filial but the fraternal affection—not only love to God but love to one another. In that better country God will be better loved, because better known ; and our believing brethren will be better loved, because they are become more lovely and we ourselves more loving. There are many good men whom here on earth it is arduous to love. They are whimsical; they are taciturn; they are opinionative and dogmatical; they are imperious and self-indulgent; they are severe and satirical; they are beset with strong prejudices or evil tempers; and their excellence is as inaccessible as the fragrance of a thorny rose or the nectar inside an adamant shell. But in that genial region the spirits of the just are perfect. Jacob is not wily, Thomas is not obstinate, Peter is not precipitate; but, like those plants which grow tall enough to leave all their youthful spines behind them—like those wines which grow old enough to outlive their original austerity, the flaws, the failures of earthly piety all have vanished in that perfect world. But apart from the growing gainliness of the celestial citizens, the grace of love has also grown. Freed from the false fire which so oft intermingled with it in former days, it becomes a pure and God-like affection, going forth to all that is holy, and acquiring fresh force constantly from the exhaustless aliment of heaven. And whilst capable of specific attachments and congenial communings, it has all the confidence of the widest good-will ; no shyness to the new-come denizen—no stiffness, no mien of strangerhood, to the redeemed of other countries ;—but assuring looks and words of welcome to all who, from east and west and

north and south, arrive and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

5. May we not add, that the many mansions suggest the many occupations? The earthly temple Jesus sometimes called his Father's house; and within the precincts of that temple there were many chambers where priests and Levites and singers lodged, and perhaps such devout worshippers as Simeon and Anna, who departed not from the temple night and day, serving God.[1] And so says the Saviour:—"As all around this earthly fane there are many residences, so in the heavenly temple there is accommodation not for one or two—not for myself alone, its great High Priest, who am now departing thither; but there are many mansions—there is space for a multitude which no man can number; room enough, I assure you, for all of you, and for all who shall believe through your word. And as, amidst your love to myself and my Father, you may be conscious of different tastes and aptitudes, so there shall still be scope for these. You shall all dwell in my Father's house; but just as among the occupants of these temple-chambers, there are some whose special business it is to offer sacrifice, whilst others lead the psalmody—there are some who read the law, and others who trim the lamps and deck the tables: so in my Father's house are many mansions, for there are many ministers: a several office for each, and room for all." God has given to each his talent and his temperament, and in the Church below He has made this diversity of gifts not a discord but a symphony—a source not of con-

[1] Dr. John Brown, *Discourses of our Lord*, vol. iii. p. 27.

fusion and disorder, but of beauty and stable symmetry. And so, doubtless, will it continue on high. The lily, when you rescue it from among the thorns, or when from the windy storm and the tempest you take it into the sunny shelter, does not become a palm or a cedar, but only a fairer, sweeter lily than before. And a topaz or a sapphire of earth, if taken to build the walls of the New Jerusalem, does not become an emerald or an amethyst, but remains a topaz or a sapphire still. And, translated from the tarnish and attrition of time, it is easy to understand how each glorified nature will retain in a higher sphere its original fitness and inherent affinities; and how for the many mansions there will not only be many occupants, but every occupant may have his own office even there. It is easy to imagine that Isaac still will meditate, and that the sweet singer of Israel shall neither be at a loss for a golden harp, nor good matter in a song. It is easy to imagine that Paul will find some outlet for his eloquence, and Peter for his energy; and not easy to conceive that John the divine will be the same as Philip or Matthew, or Martha the busy housekeeper the same as Mary the adoring listener. To every precious stone there remains its several tint; to every star its own glory; to every denizen of the Church above his own office; and to every member of the heavenly family his own mansion.

Our meditation has been of the Father's house; and the great concern with each of us should be, Am I going thither? Heaven is the Father's house—but the Father's house is the children's house. Am I a child of God?

Can I say, Abba, Father? Have I that love to God, that where He is it would be my wish and joy to be? It is the holy place. Would a holy place please me? Do I delight in holy employments now? Do I love the Sabbath-day? Do I love the house of God below? Do I love my brothers and sisters—those meek and humble ones with whom God's great house is filling? And am I on the way? or, rather, am I *in* the way? Jesus is the way to Heaven. Am I in Christ? Is He to me "the hope of glory"? Do I seek to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but His?

If through grace you have good hope of this—if you believe in God and in Jesus—then cherish home-like feelings towards the Father's house. Like an ocean pilgrim who espies a speck of dimness, a wedge of vapour, rising from the deep, and in the cold evening he scarcely cares to be told that it is land—chill and sleepy, he sees no comfort for him in a little heap of distant haze—but, after a night's sound slumber, springing to the deck, the hazy hummock has spread out into a green and glittering shore, with the stir and floating streamers of a holiday in its villages, and with early summer in the gale which morning fetches from off its meadow flowers: so many a believer, even, has far-off and frosty sensations towards the Better Land; and it is not till refreshed from time's tumult—till waking up in some happy Sabbath's spiritual-mindedness, or skirting the celestial coast in the proximity of sickness and decline—that the dim speck projects into a solid shore, bright with blessed life, and fragrant with empyreal air.

"Thou city of my God,
Home of my heart, how near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy pearly gates appear!

Oh, then my spirit pants
To reach the land I love,
The fair inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above."

And as with its remoteness, so with its attractions. You might imagine a man who had come far across the seas to visit a father whom he had not seen for many years, and in a house which he had never seen at all. And, coming to that part of the country, he espies a mansion with which he is nowise prepossessed, so huge and heavy does it look: but he is told that this is the dwelling, and a gruff ungainly porter opens for him the grand avenue gate;—and no sooner does he find himself in the vestibule than a home-glow tells him he is right, and his elder brother hastens out to meet him, and conducts him to his chamber, and soon ushers him into the presence of friends whom he is amazed and overjoyed to meet. So, in the thought that we must put off these tabernacles and pass away we know not whither, there is something from which nature secretly recoils, and which gives to the earthward side of the Father's house a blank and heavy look; and at the avenue gate Death, the grim porter, none of us can like. But still it is the Father's house; and by preparing an apartment for us, and decorating it with His own hands, and by introducing us to dear kindred already there, our Elder Brother will do all He can to make it Home.

INTERVIEWS.

I. A NOCTURNAL VISITOR.

THE Jewish Sanhedrim was a sort of parliament, a supreme national council, possessing also the powers of a court of justice. Disputes as to the interpretation of the law were referred to its decision, and in cases of heresy and blasphemy it exercised the right of punishing offenders, sometimes even putting them to death. Of this high court there were seventy members. Some of them were ecclesiastics, and some were laymen. Besides the primate, or high priest, who was the official president, and at whose entrance all the members arose, and continued standing till he requested them to be seated, there was a number of other sacerdotal personages, called chief priests, probably the heads of the different divisions, or "courses" into which this class was distributed. And besides some elders of the people, corresponding to our Saxon aldermen, or our modern knights of the shire, this council contained some of those scribes, or lay students of the law, who were distinguished for their knowledge of Scripture and tradition. Altogether, it was a grave and august assembly, including within itself priests, elders,

and scribes, the leading churchmen and the most celebrated scholars throughout the land, with the flower of the Hebrew aristocracy; and, all the rather because the number was so limited, it was an object of great ambition to be a member of Sanhedrim, and known throughout the country as a "ruler of the Jews."

This was the rank of Nicodemus: he was what we may call a peer of the Hebrew parliament, and in his religious profession he was a Pharisee. He was evidently a man of thought and seriousness, and he had been greatly struck by the incidents attending Christ's first public visit to Jerusalem. The cleansing of the temple, the miracles which Jesus had wrought, the excitement awakened in the mind of the community, together with the general expectation of Messiah's speedy appearance, had produced a deep impression on Nicodemus. It was evident that Jesus was a prophet,—it was not impossible that He might be that great Prophet promised to the fathers. If He were Messiah, there was no time to lose; if He were only an ordinary teacher come from God, He might still throw light on questions which occasioned anxiety to this "master in Israel." As yet the followers of Jesus were only peasants and poor people. "This," Nicodemus might inwardly argue, "will render a visit from a ruler all the more flattering, and on the mere ground of my rank I may hope for a cordial reception." At the same time, the circumstance that Jesus had no adherents of wealth or distinction made Nicodemus afraid to compromise himself. He therefore resolved on a course which he hoped would at once solve his doubts and save his dignity.

It was April—in Palestine soft as an English summer—and the remainder of a Passover moon, which was lighting the pilgrims to their far-away homes, silvered over the temple, and flecked with deep shadows its white marble porticos. And as he steals down the silent streets, whither is the statesman hieing? for what clandestine errand has Nicodemus muffled himself in his mantle and waited for the covert of the night? It is a humble lodging at which he pauses, and as he enters it is a plain man whom he accosts. But though the visitor has a great signet-ring on his finger and a towering turban on his head—all the insignia of wealth and high station—it is with marked deference—perhaps we should say it is not without a certain awkward air of embarrassment—that he salutes the Galilean stranger. "Rabbi, we know[1] that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." As shortly beforehand in the case of Nathanael, so now with Nicodemus, Jesus confirms the inquirer's impression, and justifies His claim to be called a prophet, by giving a specimen of His prophetic intuition. Without waiting to hear the ruler's question, by anticipation He answers it. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "You are here to inquire about Messiah's kingdom. Become a new creature, and then you will be a member of it." "How can it be?" rejoins the ruler. As if he said, "We Jews are sufficiently regenerate. We have Abraham to our father, and the kingdom of God belongs to us. You might

[1] "*We know!*—that was the lofty word of the learned."—STIER.

as soon say that a man needs to be twice born into this world, as that a Jew needs to be twice born into God's kingdom. *We* are in it already." Then, in words fitted to remind Nicodemus of John's baptism, Jesus replies, "Verily, verily, I say unto *thee*"—not to the Jews generally, but to thee, Nicodemus—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "It is common among you Jews to say that a Gentile needs to become a new creature in order to get the benefits of the Hebrew commonwealth—the privileges of the peculiar people; and when you accept him as a proselyte he is baptized, and by that symbol of washing shows that he is cleansed from his old heathenism and adopted into God's family. But a few months ago not the heathens but the Hebrews—all Jerusalem and all Judea—went out to John and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins, and professing to repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Perhaps you have been born of that water. Perhaps you have passed under John's baptismal washing. And in so doing you have confessed your need, Jew as you are—your need to be born again, in order to be fit for Messiah's kingdom; and unless you have really repented, as you then professed to do—unless you have been born of the Spirit, as well as of that water—you cannot enter the kingdom of God. It is true your descent from Abraham entitles you to certain privileges: but it does not entitle you to heaven. From Abraham you can only derive a depraved and corrupt nature. From the Spirit of God you need to receive a new and spiritual mind. 'That which is born of the flesh

is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.' True, it is a mystery—but how many things are mysteries! Hark to that sighing breeze. Your eye cannot catch it. You see not where the current of air commenced, nor, now that it is passed on its viewless path, can you tell whither it has gone. Yet you hear its sound, you feel its force: in the waving branches and the flying clouds you perceive its effects. And so it is not by perceiving the Spirit in His progress, or watching His proceedings, but by marking the results, that you know when a man is born from above." Still, to the inquirer, it was a dark enigma. "How can these things be?" "Are you a public instructor, a student and authorized expounder of Scripture, and yet do you not know these things? Do you not know that God is holy and requires a holy nature in the subjects of His kingdom? You stumble at the saying; yet we speak that which we do know, and testify that which we have seen. And, indeed, this doctrine of Regeneration may be called an earthly thing: an earthly man might almost concede it: for even an earthly man might be persuaded that he would need to become something else than he now is before he is fit to see and enjoy God. But if this earthly thing perplexes you—a truth scarcely beyond the reach of reason—how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? This necessity of a spiritual renovation is so obvious that it scarcely needed a teacher come from God to tell it: one might have expected that your own conscience would have at once assented, and that on the very score of the fitness

of things you would have granted that, before he enters a spiritual community, the candidate must become a spiritual man. Yet if you hesitate when I assert a truth so obvious and so open to your own cognisance, how will you believe if I proceed to answer your question, and to tell you heavenly things—things where your own experience cannot help you, and where you must proceed entirely on the testimony of the only person now on earth who ever was in heaven."

Nevertheless, in His condescension, and looking forward to a time when the invisible ink would darken, and when lessons now lost would freshen on the listener's memory, Jesus went on to state a few of these heavenly things. In other words, He at once explained the means by which a soul dead in trespasses is made alive to God, or born again; and in the same utterance He corrected the erroneous preconceptions regarding God's kingdom which filled the mind of His visitor. "You fancy that Messiah is to be exalted on the throne of David his father; and whilst, like a potter's vessel, He dashes in pieces the pagans, you expect that in His exaltation Israel is to rise to be supreme among the nations. But that is incorrect. For first, it is not on a throne, and as a conqueror, that the Son of Man is to be exalted, but more as Moses raised the serpent in the wilderness, and like that serpent, not a sight of terror, but a spectacle of healing. And secondly, it is not for the destruction of the heathen, but for the salvation of the world, that Messiah is come.[1] 'For God so loved,' not the Hebrew people, but mankind, 'that he

[1] Dr. John Brown, *Discourses of our Lord*, vol. i. p. 18.

gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him [whether Gentile or Jew] should not perish but have everlasting life. For [at present] God has not sent his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' And thirdly, Messiah's coming is no exaltation of the Jews at the cost of the Gentiles; for he that believeth on Him, even the Gentile who receives Messiah in the capacity in which God sends Him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, even although he be a Jew, is condemned already, because he has rejected God's Messenger, and refused as a Saviour God's only Son. Nicodemus, do you depart? Are you only half convinced? It is not for want of evidence if you are not fully persuaded. Light has now come into the world. That Light is here. I am the Light of the World; but you fear to let the truth shine fully upon you, for you cannot afford the consequences."

Such, as we apprehend it, is the purport of what transpired in this remarkable interview—the first of our Lord's fully-recorded conversations. He taught Nicodemus some "earthly things;" some things which had been already revealed to mankind in the Scriptures, and which, as a teacher in Israel, Nicodemus ought to have known; things which might commend themselves to unsophisticated reason, and to which the conscience of Nicodemus ought at once to have responded. He taught that Messiah's kingdom was God's realm—a community of holy men; and that, in order to be admitted, it was not enough to be descended from Abraham—a man would need to be born of God—he would need to get again

those tastes and affections which that son of God, unfallen Adam, once possessed. He reminded Nicodemus of those lustrations which Gentile proselytes underwent when they were "born" into the Hebrew commonwealth, and which, possibly, Nicodemus had undergone at the hands of the Baptist as an acknowledgment of sin and as a preparation for Messiah's expected advent; but He taught him that except a man experience an inward purification corresponding to the outward sign—unless he be born of the Spirit as well as of water—"he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." These were earthly things. They were things already revealed, and which belonged to Nicodemus and all his brethren. And they were things which, approving themselves to a sound understanding, it should not have required a teacher come from God to repeat and inculcate. Then Jesus taught this ruler some heavenly things. He taught some things which were not yet plainly promulgated, and which were only known to the Son of man who is in heaven. He told how, in some mysterious manner corresponding to the elevation of the serpent in the wilderness, He Himself was to become the means of a new existence—the author of a spiritual and everlasting life to depraved and dying men. He taught that Messiah's errand is not local or national, but that He is God's gift of love to all mankind. And He taught that in order for even a Jew and a convert of John the Baptist to be saved, it was needful to believe on the Son of God; it was needful to recognise Him in the character in which God revealed Him, and to receive Him in the capacity in which God sent Him.

Thus much was taught. How much was comprehended or believed at the moment we cannot tell. We only know that Nicodemus did not then, nor for a great while after, "come to the light." Next morning, no one knew where he had been; and perhaps if he had met his instructor in the temple courts on the following day, he would have passed Him without recognition. Still, the conversation was not lost. It lingered in his memory. He mused on both its earthly things and its heavenly things; and, feeling more than ever that Jesus was a teacher come from God, doubtless he had many a secret wish to become, like John and Andrew, one of His disciples. But they were all poor Galileans, and Nicodemus was one of the most distinguished residents in Jerusalem. Besides, it is a hard thing for the preceptor to become a pupil: it is a sore descent for the public instructor to acknowledge his ignorance, and come down from the chair of the teacher to the bench of the learner.

Two years passed on, and Nicodemus was not suspected. It was the last Feast of Tabernacles which Jesus attended, and so great was the popular excitement regarding Him, that a meeting of the Sanhedrim was called, and the priests sent officers to arrest Him. The Sanhedrim met, and Nicodemus attended. You wonder what were his thoughts. Doubtless he deemed it safer to take his place in the court, than occasion remark by his absence. And possibly he hoped that an opportunity might arise of befriending the teacher come from God: he might do something to demonstrate His excellence, or to mitigate the malice of His enemies. Oh! what a perilous part to

sustain is the part of a secret disciple! And well was it for Nicodemus—perhaps it saved him from forestalling the cowardly compliances of Pilate or the suicidal treachery of Judas—that no trial took place that day. The court was in conclave. The officers had been a good time absent; but as it was notorious where Jesus could be found, no doubt was felt but that they would soon arrive with their prisoner. And here they come at last; but instead of the rush and uproar of a mob scrambling for admittance, as when an important prisoner is led in, the Pharisees are aghast, for nobody enters except those foolish-looking officials. "Why have ye not brought Him?" shouts an ecclesiastic. "Never man spake like this man," stammers one of the apparitors. I can quite believe you, thinks one of the judges, for I have heard Him myself. However, that was a silent rejoinder; and one of his colleagues sneered at the poor bailiffs, "Are you also deluded? Has any ruler or Pharisee believed in Him?" And he cursed the lower orders for not understanding the law. "The law?" interposed a calmer voice: it was Nicodemus catching up his neighbour's execration of the people who do not know the law: "doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" At which the angry spokesman turned on him, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Nicodemus did not answer; the council broke up; every man went to his own house; and "he who came to Jesus by night" still went about wearing his disguise.

Other six months passed on, and Nicodemus had not

lost his prepossession for this "teacher come from God." Doubtless he often mused on that first and memorable interview, and possibly some of its sayings began to brighten on his mind. Most likely he was was now convinced of the earthly things, and in his own timidity and time-serving found another reason why a man must be born again before he can enter God's kingdom. But was Jesus really the Son of God? As such to receive or reject Him—is this actually the alternative of everlasting life or death—the hinge of heaven or hell? And what is meant by the Son of man being set on high, as Moses set on high the serpent in the wilderness? These queries, as he revolved them in his mind, deepened his thoughtfulness and intensified his interest in the Prophet of Galilee; but although Nicodemus was the confidant of a fuller gospel, though Jesus had communicated to him some particulars of which no other was yet in possession, still he kept aloof; and the very converse of Nathanael the guileless Israelite, he waited till the last of his difficulties should dispel, and his cautious mind be carried captive by some conclusive and resistless token. Amidst these meditations the rumour ran that Jesus was at last in the hands of His enemies; and that incident, which shocked and scattered the open disciples, was a spell which drew this secret disciple to Calvary. There it was—"As Moses lifted up the serpent, so the Son of man was at last lifted up." He was lifted up, and He drew Nicodemus to Him. His own mysterious prophecy is now fulfilled; and this "Son of man" is withal the "Son of God." The heathen centurion has just exclaimed as much, and Nicodemus feels it true.

His death is a miracle eclipsing all the marvels of His life, and "truly this is the Son of God." To Nicodemus what a commentary was now visible on the words of that eventful evening, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Nicodemus now believed; and by the same incidents which stumbled others, and made all men forsake Him and flee —by the same signs, convinced and converted, the ruler tore off the mask, and pressed forward to honour the lifeless remains of the uplifted Messiah. But, lo! the same moment has uplifted the visor of another secret disciple. A brother ruler also believes. For already Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, has besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and thus He who in life had nowhere to lay His head "makes his grave with the rich,"[1] and the obsequies of the crucified Nazarene are conducted by two of the chief men of Jerusalem.

[1] Isaiah liii. 9.

II.

THE BANQUET HALL.

JESUS was surrounded by a crowd of people, when two disciples of John the Baptist arrived with a message from their master: "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" The motive of that message we need not now discuss. The Saviour did not instantly reply. He first preached the gospel, and He cured many of their diseases, and then He added, "Tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached: and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." That is, Messiah is come, for the prophecies concerning Him are fulfilled.[1] Messiah is come, for "the lame man leaps as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sings." Messiah is come, for instead of the old monopoly by which the rich and the reputable restricted salvation to themselves, the kingdom of heaven throws open its gates to the outcast and ignorant,—to those whom the priesthood despises because they have nothing to pay, to those whom the learned despise because they know not the law,—nay, to

[1] Isaiah lxi. 1-3; xxxv. 5, 6.

those who are in their own eyes small and despised, for as regards all moral worth they know that they are bankrupts and paupers. To the poor the gospel is preached.

John's messengers departed, and when they were gone, still dwelling on this merciful aspect of His mission, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and spoke aloud the thought which had lighted up his countenance: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." And then, addressing the audience, He added, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That is, "I am the Father's plenipotentiary. I know His very mind, and I am invested with all His authority. Churchmen can prescribe penances, but I can give pardon. Scribes can lay on heavy burdens, and bid you labour for eternal life, but I can give you rest. Your own hearts can teach you that sin has made you outlaws from God, but I can make you again His children and friends. Become you my disciples." "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Of the crowd then gathered round the Saviour, two members now become prominent. One of them was a gentleman, respectable and religiously inclined. Like Nicodemus, he was not quite a convert to the new Teacher's doctrine; and yet he was impressed by His

elevation and earnestness. His miracles were amazing. He had just restored to life Simon's young neighbour, the son of the widow at Nain, and that very morning He had by His astonishing cures conferred unspeakable obligations on the district of which Simon was a principal inhabitant. Perhaps, too, the day might come when Jesus should be more distinguished; and if He really rose to be king of Israel—if He should actually turn out the successor of David and Solomon—it would always be something to recall, "Oh yes! He was once in this house, and dined at this very table." But Jesus was still despised by Simon's own class. None of the rulers believed on Him. His attendants were fishermen, and all His antecedents were obscure,—Bethlehem, Nazareth, the carpenter's cottage,—and in his lowly guise Simon received Him patronizingly. Had He been a man of his own rank, or one whom he delighted to honour, he would have met Him in the door-way with a cordial embrace, and conducting Him into the banquet-room, the attendants would have taken off His sandals, and would have laved His feet and hands with fragrant waters, whilst the host himself would have poured upon His locks the shining oil. But Simon was a Pharisee—accustomed to judge after the outward appearance—and to his view Jesus was quite as much the poor man as the good man. He felt that it was condescension to receive such a visitor, and by the compromising way in which he managed the matter, he showed quite as much anxiety for his own reputation as gratitude or reverence towards his guest.

Simon was blind to the real character of Jesus: for he

was blind to his own condition. Regular in his formal devotions, correct in his conduct,—always sitting down to his meals with washen hands, and thanking God that he was not as other men, "extortioners, unjust, or even as this publican," to him a revelation of mercy was as superfluous and irrelevant as a pardon would seem useless to a favourite basking in the smiles of his sovereign. Not being "poor," the gospel was preached to him in vain; and when the great Teacher expanded His arms, and said, "Come to me, all ye that are heavy laden: take my yoke upon you, and learn of me"—it never occurred to him to step forward and say, "Yes, blessed Teacher! lay that yoke on me. Thou only knowest the Father: reveal Him to me. Rid me of my heavy load, and make me Thy disciple:" for to Simon sin was no sensible burden, and there was little which any teacher could tell which he did not think that he knew already; and for the lowly, loving, son-like piety of Jesus, Simon's proud and self-sufficient spirit had no affinity.

So, dear reader, is there in your own mind none of this arrogant self-complacency? Looking at the sinful multitude, are you not apt to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men"? And are you not apt to patronize the Saviour? You give Him a civil invitation to come under your roof. You have prayers with the family. You say grace before meat. You go as far as you can go genteelly. And yet were the Saviour accepting your somewhat stiff request: were He coming under your roof in answer to your prayer, might it not be said that He had gone into the house of a second Simon? Just look

at this banquet board. See what a contrast! Jesus and a Pharisee! "On the one side the living spirit: on the other the letter that killeth. On the one side simplicity and godly sincerity: on the other outward appearance. On the one side the self-forgetfulness which seeks God's glory: on the other the pride which seeks its own honour. On the one side the tender compassion which saves the lost: on the other the unsympathizing selfishness which despises them."[1]

But, as was already hinted, in the crowd which had been listening to Jesus in the open air, there appears to have been another individual note-worthy. She was a poor outcast, and as she stood hidden in the throng, she felt herself the vilest there. Her sins were crimson, and in comparison with herself she envied as a holy man the hardest worldling in all the company. But as she looked on the Divine Speaker, and listened to His heavenly words, there began to spring up strange sensations in her soul. It seemed as if there were passing over her spirit a fresh, pure gale from the days of her childhood, and as if she were inhaling the bliss of innocence again: and just as her past life grew loathsome,—just as in the contact of a goodness so new and so inspiring, she almost felt as if sin could never be pleasant any more,—those kind and cheering words of Jesus fell upon her ear,—"Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden,"—and they nearly broke her heart. Was it so indeed? Might she really hope for mercy? Was that the Son of God declaring the Father's mind concerning sinners?—and was He

[1] *Het Evangelie*, by Doedes.

really so "meek and lowly" as to say to such as she, "Take my yoke upon you"? Oh! if she might only hope it:—if that sinless One would only teach her how to be rid of sin:—if He would only help her to throw off that heavy load, a long memory of crime,—her own debased and ruined self! Surely He was kind enough to do it,—and the Father's mighty Son was able. But with these charming words the address was ended; the congregation dispersed; and along with a few others the Divine Speaker entered the house of Simon. Wistfully did the poor outcast look after them: for in that Holy One were centred all her hopes: from Himself, if from any in the universe, must come her salvation. But at that moment she might not follow Him. Yes,—He had spoken kindly to sinners in the mass; and she believed He would speak as kindly to the chief of sinners if she appeared alone: but she would like to hear it from His own lips—at least she would like to listen to that wonder-working voice again. So she hasted away, and got the most precious thing she possessed,—a box of costly essence,—and availing herself of that right of free entrance which still prevails in these regions, she found her way into Simon's banquet-hall. Stealing up to the spot where the Saviour reclined, she stood behind the guests, and the couch on which Jesus lay. The exact thought that arose in her mind we cannot tell: but likely it was just the contrast between them:—"Here am I so vile—and Thou so holy. All pollution I, and Thou all sanctity. A hell-brand I, enkindled from the infernal fire and destroying all I touch: pure goodness Thou, Heaven's kindness all

incarnate, saving all who come to Thee." And as she gazed on those blessed feet which went about continually doing good, and perceived them still dusty with the travel of the day, a tear fell, and, as with the tresses of her hair she brushed it off, it was her impulse to open the alabaster box and suffuse those sacred feet with the aromatic oil which she durst not pour upon His head. Indignant and disgusted, Simon observed it all, and thought with himself, This man is no prophet. He little knows what an infamous creature that woman is. But Jesus said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." "Master, say on." "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. The one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty. But both were bankrupt. They had nothing to pay, and so he frankly forgave them both. Tell me which will be most grateful."—That is, We shall suppose that this woman is a sinner tenfold worse than you—ten times deeper in God's debt. But you have nothing any more than she. In that respect you are alike. Neither has any effects—any goodness—any merit—aught to meet the claims of law and justice: Suppose I were frankly forgiving both: who is likely to feel the deepest obligation?—And Simon answered, "I suppose the one who has the largest amount forgiven." And Jesus answered, "Thou hast rightly judged. Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house. Thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed them with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head thou didst not anoint

with oil; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven: for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." As much as if He had said, Were one forgiven who thinks himself so little of a sinner as you think yourself, he would feel little thankfulness: but God is glorified in the forgiveness of a sinner like this,—for great is her gratitude. And thoroughly to assure her agitated spirit, He added, "Thy sins are forgiven,"—and when they raised the question, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" with kingly majesty He ignored their cavil, and only repeated, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

Yes, Simon was confounded at this woman's presumption. His own impulse would have been to hurl her out of doors, and he could not comprehend why his guest allowed her to come near Him. "If this man were a prophet, He would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner." But Jesus knew. He knew her case, and He understood her feeling. He knew that this was a pardoned sinner, who would sin no more. He knew that this was His own beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." He knew that in all that apartment there was not one to whom sin looked so horrible: nor one with a conscience so tender as that poor sobbing outcast. He knew that it was a relief for her to weep: that she would fain pour forth her very soul in this burst of delicious sorrow: and it was good for her to weep. A joy mingled with these tears; and that blessed Spirit who

had opened their fountain was meanwhile filling her soul with His own transfusive sanctity and with aspirations after new obedience. And where Simon saw only the "sinner," Jesus saw the pardoned penitent: and far from finding contamination in her presence or pollution in her touch, this brand plucked from the burning was to Him the dearest of trophies. To the Saviour no music could be sweeter than those sobs of heartfelt contrition, no balm from the broken alabaster so welcome as this penitent's tears.

From this incident we see what it is which produces true repentance. If you were going out into the open air on a frosty day, and were you taking a lump of ice, you might pound it with a pestle, but it would still continue ice. You might break it into ten thousand atoms, but, so long as you continue in that wintry atmosphere, every fragment, however small, will still be frozen. But come within. Bring in the ice beside your own bright and blazing fire, and soon in that genial glow "the waters flow." A man may try to make himself contrite. He may search out his sins and set them before him, and dwell on all their enormity, and still feel no true repentance. Though pounded with penances in the mortar of fasts and macerations, his heart continues hard and icy still. And as long as you keep in that legal atmosphere it cannot thaw. There may be elaborate confession, a got-up sort of penitence, a voluntary humility, but there is no godly sorrow. But come to Jesus with His words of grace and truth. From the cold winter night of the ascetic come into the summer of

the Great Evangelist. Let that flinty frozen spirit bask a little in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Listen for a little to those words which melted this sinner into a penitent—which broke her alabaster box and brimmed over in tears of ecstatic sorrow and self-condemning devotion: for, finding that you too have much forgiven, you also will love much. The soul which only grew more estranged from God in the effort to conquer its own enmity will become a joyful captive in the arms of fatherly forgiveness; and taking up the easy yoke of that Redeemer who has taken off your heavy burden, you will find rest for your soul in the service of that Saviour who freely and fully pardons all your sins.

III.

A YOUNG MAN WHO WENT AWAY SORROWFUL.

Man, the child of God, was happy once, and he was happy because God was in His proper place; the Father was in the heart of His child. There could be no doubt about it; the living God was man's dearest friend and chiefest joy, and his blessedness was great, for the source whence it came was exhaustless. He who is the Treasure of Heaven—the King of its angels—the wealth of all worlds, was the Father of man.

So truly was this the case, that earthly sonship was only an image of the closer relation which bound man to his truest and most peculiar Parent. Had innocence lasted long enough, a sinless Cain or Abel might in process of time have outgrown the dependent and up-looking feelings which bound him to his earthly sire; and remoteness of scene might have interrupted the intercourse. But no change of place could have created distance from God, or suspended the communion with heaven; and advancing years would only have made him feel more profoundly the tender and numberless ties which bound him to the Father of his spirit—his celestial Sire—his Parent proper and supreme.

God was man's Father, and the heavenly Father communed with His earthly child. He not only gave him food, which built up his body, but He gave him thoughts, feelings, affections which nourished his immortal nature—sights to look at, things to think of, which kept up the eternal life in his mind. And how did that life evolve? how was God's life in man's soul expressed and exhibited? For one thing, in worship. He could never say sufficiently how grateful he was, nor how beautiful, how kind, how adorable his heavenly Father appeared. And, for another thing, that Divine life developed in beneficence. The conscious love of Infinite Goodness made him exceeding glad, and gladness coming from such a source made him gracious, communicative, kindly affectioned. Brimming over with blessedness, he was the fellow-worker with God; and, although it had only been to fetch a cup of cold water to a companion, or restore to the nest some callow fledgling that had fallen over, the smile of complacent Deity in the soul must have found an outlet in some deed of tender mercy; and, although it had only been in training a rose or grouping the flowers of a border, to carry forward the Father's plan, and finish the Father's work, was the meat and drink of Paradise.

A blessed state, which was quickly ended. Man sinned. God forsook His place in the heart of His guilty and fallen child; and, alas! as He retired, the heart closed its doors against Him. It was still a heart—still a great, greedy, affectionate, craving thing, which needs for its satisfaction an infinite and all-worthy object. But the one object was gone; and ever since man lost his "trea-

sure in heaven"—ever since he lost that God who is the gold of angels and who was the riches of Paradise[1]—his great effort has been to find a substitute. Instead of opening the heart's door and readmitting the original and rightful occupant, he fills the space as best he can with idols. Of these the favourite and most frequent is the world or mammon. In that shrine which once flamed and glowed with indwelling Deity, and where the love of God sustained perpetual summer, there now burns, to make the darkness visible, a little night-light of earthly friendship or creature-fondness; and on that throne, where once presided the great I AM, now sits, in mockery at once of the living God and of the fatuous worshipper, a golden pagod, or mayhap some foul desire or sinful passion—a something which holds in its hand the strings that move the man: whilst, after all, his noblest faculties, like so much obsolete lumber, lie unnoticed and unused, and crumbling to decay.

The Lord Jesus understood, even as He pitied, the case of lapsed humanity. His errand was to restore man's blessedness by restoring God's supremacy. He came to set up anew God's kingdom in the soul of man. On the one side, as the great Priest-Victim He expiated the sacrilege of which man had been guilty in profaning God's temple and in placing obscene usurpers on Jehovah's throne; and His own most precious blood He puts at the

[1] "Have money-worshippers really considered it, that the living God is not dead metal, and yet that He is, strictly speaking, the only *human gold*? Rich men are the men who carry God in their souls, and these are the only men who have the true human gold to give. The receiver of this gold receives an unmingled blessing; and the giver becomes richer by giving."—Pulsford's *Quiet Hours*, p. 31.

disposal of every penitent who seeks to cleanse his heart from idols. On the other hand, as God's Prophet and man's King, He seeks to make the sinner desirous of God's return to the forsaken shrine. He seeks to make the sinner feel how guilty he was when he said to the living God, "Depart," and He seeks to make the sinner feel how truly poor and wretched he is with coin in his chest but no God in his heart; with loving but dying children around him who call him father, whilst the Immortal Father owns him as no child. Perhaps even now that great Apostle of our profession speaks to some one; for Christ's mission did not end at Olivet—the voice which spake on earth still speaks from heaven. Perhaps even now the Lord Jesus has knocked at your heart-door, and the hollow sound that echoes back tells him and you, that it is vacant, or filled with ostentatious emptiness. Your chief end is to glorify self and enjoy the present world for ever; or at the very best, your chief end is to glorify and gladden that expanded self, your nearest friends and dearest kindred; and it misgives you that, beautiful as the idol is, it is not the living God, and that you would need to get something more before you can be sure of "treasure in heaven."

The evangelists tell us that on one of His journeys the Lord Jesus was met by a young ruler, who came to Him running, in his anxiety to ask Him a question. He was a young man of excellent character and engaging manners —so prepossessing that, as the interview proceeded, Mark says, "Jesus loved him." His first exclamation was, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal

life?" Reminding him that "none is truly good but God,"—Jesus answered by repeating the second table of the law. Half-pleased, half-mortified, glad to think that he had fulfilled this requirement already, but sorry that the great Teacher had no more specific prescription, he replied, "All these have I observed from my youth." By no means surprised at the answer—knowing it to be sincere though sadly erroneous—the Lord Jesus made the prescription more specific, and put the test another way. That second table may be summed up in one sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Accordingly Jesus said, "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross, and follow me." This rejoinder instantly rent open the refuge of lies, and disclosed to the youth his reigning worldly-mindedness. After all, he did not love his neighbour as himself. After all, he was not so desirous of heavenly treasure that, in order to gain it, he could part with a few acres of land. After all, he was not so alive to God, nor so intent on His favour, as to descry in the "good Master" any Divine lineaments, or even to care to follow further One whom to know is everlasting life. "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

There were interesting features in this young man's character, and for these the Lord Jesus loved him. Some who are of a sterner mould would not have felt so kindly. They would have scowled on all the amenities and attractions of this youth as mere natural goodness, mere carnal virtue, dead morality. But such as they were, they pos-

sessed a certain charm in the eyes of Jesus Christ. He saw in them the hand of God. Even in these outward accomplishments and in this general correctness of conduct He recognised restraining grace. And in the mind of the Saviour, at the sight of this youth, so ingenuous, so sincere, and so outwardly correct, although still outside of the kingdom, there was awakened a sentiment very different from that which He felt towards false and cunning Pharisees, profane and jeering Sadducees, and such open reprobates and ruffians as He sometimes encountered in Nazareth and Samaria. But with all these feelings of interest and affection, the Lord Jesus did not speak to him premature peace or dangerous comfort. He saw that this young inquirer was still in the bond of iniquity; He saw that he had yet to discover the plague of his own heart; He saw that he was one of those who fancy that they are whole and need not a physician; and He knew that any answer which did not reveal to him his true character, would be to deceive his soul and speed him on to perdition with a lie in his right hand. And with that holy fidelity which triumphs over natural feeling, Jesus gave the unwelcome reply; the answer which sent away dejected and gloomy one who had run up to Him radiant with hope and eager to exhibit his reverential regard: teaching us that our love to our friends should never make us flatter their mistakes, nor deal falsely by their immortal interests.

Let us look for a little—

1. At those features in this young ruler's character which, as the Son of man, the Lord Jesus loved.

2. Those defects in this young man's character which, as the Son of God, the Lord Jesus detected and disclosed.

I. 1. He was sound in his creed. At that period the fashionable religion in Palestine was a sort of Materialism. Owing to their intercourse with Gentile nations, and partly a reaction from the hollow truisms and puerile inanities of the rabbis, a Hellenistic rage was at this time overspreading the refined circles in the Holy Land, and much useless trouble was taken to deck the truths of Revelation in the new costume. The consequence was, that many became ashamed of their old Hebrew book. The Bible was not sufficiently classical; and in certain coteries people began to talk about myths and Mosaic fables, and doubted if there were such a thing as an angel, or a soul distinct from the material frame, or any resurrection of the body. And amongst the young and the rich and the thoughtless, these opinions had amazing currency. They were new, and this recommended them to bold and dashing spirits. They put God and a future judgment out of the way, and that endeared them to the voluptuous and vicious,—to the jovial spirits, who shouted, "Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds and drench our garlands in wine; let us eat and drink and be merry: for to-morrow we die, and all is done." And they had a show of wisdom. Leaving out of sight the sacred books, these Gentile writers were incomparably more clever, more profound, and more brilliant, than any who took the side of the ancient faith: and, as if to provoke every powerful understanding and every cultivated mind into this Sadducean free-thinking, the theologians and re-

ligious teachers of the day rushed into the opposite extreme; and, to avoid the suspicion of Gentilism, dulness became the badge of orthodoxy and triteness the test of truth.

Now, from the first exclamation of this young man, any spectator might have gathered that he had not left the faith of his fathers: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Contrary to the prevailing scepticism, he believed in the soul's immortality, and was anxious about his own destiny in the world to come. And that single utterance was a powerful prepossession in his favour. Knowing all the temptations to which he was exposed; knowing how often he must have run the gauntlet of derision and contempt; knowing how frequently he must have been bantered by his friends for his antiquated notions, and how many hints he must have had as to their mental weakness or moral cowardice who still frequented synagogues and said their prayers; knowing how at the tables of the gay and the genteel he must have been many times rallied for following the faith of some mother Eunice, or some "grandmother" Lois; knowing all the temptations to infidelity which encompassed a young man of his distinction, and hearing from his lips this confession of his faith, Jesus loved him for his orthodoxy.

And our youthful reader is to be congratulated if, like this ruler, he believes the Bible. Our times are not wholly dissimilar. The world just now is full of vigorous thinkers: but few of these are firm believers. The press is teeming with fresh and wonderful books; books written

in new styles, and either exhibiting new truths or drawing new and startling conclusions from familiar facts. And every man is sanguine as to the powers of his prescription—the success of his panacea: he is sure that his proposal is to carry the world's convictions and new-create society. But whilst the literature of the day is lifesome and bold and leonine; whilst, full of energy and self-reliance, it practises and prospers,—religion is too often tame and timid. It is not always that the pious books of the present day have the freshness and power of its secular publications. They look as if they only half believed the Bible; they are terrified to translate it; they dare not put new words on familiar truths; they are too often trite and commonplace; the echoes of an echo; the shadows of a shade. And in such times, when genius is so sceptical and faith so dull, there are strong temptations to a young and vigorous understanding to fall in with popular forms of unbelief. Few are so earnest that they will read a good book for the sake of its goodness, however tame the thought and however flat the style. And few can read brilliant books, from which religion is banished, or in which it is openly reviled, without carrying away the contagious damage. And, therefore, in such times, and surrounded by such influences, we specially congratulate youthful and accomplished minds, if they have escaped the Sadducean pestilence. If you have learned to distinguish betwixt clear facts and clever fancies; if along with the sentiment which admires the gorgeous colours of the evening sky, you possess the common sense which to a castle up

among these clouds prefers a cottage on the plain; if, amidst the ever-changing ideal you keep a steady grasp of the unchanging historical; if, when the fashionable philosophy is springing up like the grass in summer, or picturesque theories are blossoming like the flowers of the season,—you still remember, "The grass withereth and the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever," we congratulate you on the wisdom of your conclusion and the security of your position. And still more would we wish you joy, if these convictions are so strong that you do not scruple to declare them; if, amidst thoughtless companions or open scoffers, you do not disguise nor disavow your persuasion; if the scorner's laugh do not deter you from the sanctuary, nor make you ashamed of pious parents and a praying home; if you have never felt it brave to be a blasphemer, nor dastardly to fear the Lord. Such convictions and such conquests over unbelief are the gift of God; blessings for which, so far as they go, you should be very grateful, and beauties of character such as, embodied in this young ruler, the Saviour loved.

2. But more than this, he was a moral man. Jesus repeated to him the commandments, "Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness," etc., and he could answer, "All these have I kept from my infancy up." Doubtless, that answer showed that he had still to learn the purity and heart-pervasiveness of God's law; but it showed how much decorum and decency had marked his outward conduct. His conscience did not reproach him with any great and outstanding

transgression; he had never embezzled money intrusted to his keeping; he had never enriched himself by defrauding others; he had never, to his knowledge, told a lie; he had never slandered nor falsely accused a companion; and there was no dark day in his history to which reluctant memory was ever and anon reverting,—no gloomy day, in which some guilty secret lay entombed, and from which he dreaded it might spring in sudden and ghastly resurrection. But over his general and world-ward conduct his eye could glide with prevailing satisfaction; and so far as society went, he moved about a fearless and unembarrassed man, grasping every proffered hand sincerely, looking trustfully into every cordial countenance, with no dread of stumbling into pits which himself had digged, or startling the ghosts of buried crimes; regarding the Cities of Refuge as humane asylums for his less fortunate fellows, and the trespass-offerings as a gracious provision for the sinful multitude; nor perhaps altogether without a mixture of that self-complacency which says, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."

Reader, can you say as much? Have you this young man's outward morality and freedom from common sins? Or are you one of those, who, hoping to "do" some good thing, so as to inherit eternal life, "fall short of one, who, after all, fell short of heaven?"

3. But the young ruler was more than correct. There was something very captivating in his character. Some persons are blameless, but they have about them nothing beautiful. You cannot point out their faults, but you are

conscious of no fascination in them. But with this young man it was entirely different; and with that suggestive profusion which marks the pencil of these evangelist-artists, we can detect even in this rapid sketch much that is graceful and gainly. You see him frank, courageous, and unaffected. Jesus is passing on his way, and fearful of missing his opportunity, and absorbed by his own earnestness, he thinks nothing of posting along the road and running quickly up, forgetful of the solemn gait which befits exalted station. And with the same inadvertency to appearances,—with the same free and manly expression of his respectful and reverential feelings, you see him kneeling down as he accosts the Saviour; and you cannot fail to notice the cordiality as well as courtesy of his address,—his confidence in Christ's wisdom and benevolence as he hails Him, "Kind Teacher, Good Master." And the whole interview leaves on your mind an impression of urbanity, politeness, just sentiment, and natural feeling, open-hearted gentleness, and engaging suavity; all confirmed when we read that Jesus, when He looked on him, loved him.

And so may there be those amongst us, who are extremely amiable, but yet who lack the one thing. You are mild in your temper, and gentle in your movements. You like to do obliging things, and make those around you happy. And people love you. They cannot help admiring your faultless conduct, and feeling grateful for your kind attentions. And everything you do is dutiful; you are so correct and obedient, so diligent and self-denying, and so exemplary, that even pious friends might be

ready to ask, What does he lack? But were you kneeling before the heart-searching Saviour, like this interesting youth,—are you sure that He would see no lack? Would He not see a heart quite cold to God? heedless about Him or absolutely hating Him? Would he not see a heart quite filled with other things, and not even a corner kept for Himself? Would He not see a heart set upon people's praise or people's love, but never caring for the praise and the love of God? As Boston says, "Many are the devil's lions, filling the place where they live with the noise of their revels and riotings; but this young man was one of the devil's lambs, going to hell without letting the world hear the sound of his feet."

4. He was a religious inquirer. He was in earnest about his soul. He had evidently been turning the subject over in his mind. He was not entirely satisfied with himself. Notwithstanding his morality, he felt that there was something wanting. He did not feel as if he were yet inheriting eternal life. His religion did not satisfy himself. And in the hope that the missing secret might be revealed, and the painful want supplied, he determined on consulting Jesus. And he carried his intention explicitly out. He did not steal an interview, nor come, like Nicodemus, disguised and through the dark: but on the patent road and in the public day, in the presence of others, and most likely with the knowledge of some of his neighbours, he hasted to the feet of Jesus, and put his momentous question openly.

Have you ever inquired? Have you ever taken a thought about your soul and its everlasting salvation?

Have you ever said to yourself, "Well, it is a very serious matter this, to have a soul which must soon be in heaven or hell for ever. True, I am young, and summer days are bright, and I am fond of pastime, and I have some important work on hand. But my soul? How can I find balm in the breath of June—how can I find cheerfulness in my work or pleasure in my play, so long as my soul is perishing? And, let me see, my Bible says, 'Except ye be converted—except ye be born again, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' But I doubt if I am converted. I am sure that I am not born again. How am I to come at it? How shall I find salvation? How shall I ever get to heaven?"

We have now seen what there was interesting and attractive about this young ruler. He was sound in his creed. At a time when throughout Palestine most of the refined and fashionable people were freethinkers and Sadducees, he was a believer in revelation, and firm in the only faith. And he was correct in his conduct. Free from flagrant crimes, he had outwardly fulfilled the various commands, and could answer to each in succession, All these have I kept. And there was in his character and disposition much that was captivating and prepossessing. Frank, affable, and courteous, it was fine to see a ruler so humble, and a young man so thoughtful. For this gave additional charm to all his other features, —he was a religious inquirer, and really in earnest about his soul's salvation.

And as there you see the noble youth kneeling at Messiah's feet, you are ready to exclaim, "O blessed

Jesus, deal gently with the lad! Deal gently with him for his own sake and for Thine! He is young and amiable, and the world still smiles on him: do not scare him away with that formidable cross. Look at him, and confess if Thou dost not love him? Is he not engaging? and would he not prove to Thyself a companion more congenial, and an associate more intelligent, than these rude fishermen? And is he not a ruler? Would there not be a sanction in his support, and an asylum in his friendship? and would it not annihilate the taunt, Have any of the rulers believed on Him? And is he not rich? With such a disciple in Thy retinue, Thou needest never say again, 'The foxes have holes,' for every mansion in Jewry would be open to Thee then? And is he not refined? and might not men of rank—might not many rulers and rich men, be brought to believe through the influence of such a minister?"

No; there is only one path to the kingdom. There is not one salvation for the rich and another for the poor; there is not one cross for the noble and another for the fisherman. Nothing but a new heart will enter heaven; and in this affecting instance the Saviour has taught us that whether encased in the most repulsive depravity, or encircled with all the charms of a well-spent youth, a carnal mind cannot enter the kingdom.

II. In a moment, and by His Divine intuition, the Lord Jesus saw how it stood with this inquirer. He knew far better than the man himself the state of his inmost soul. And though the youth imagined that his desire of salvation was supreme, Jesus saw that it was only

secondary, and brought clearly out these two things—1. That he had no right knowledge of sin; and 2. No sufficient desire for the favour and enjoyment of God.

1. First of all, the Saviour went over the leading commands, and to these the young man unhesitatingly answered that he had kept them all. He did not mean to deceive, and Jesus loved him none the less for his honest but erroneous answer. It was true according to his own understanding of these precepts, but that he should understand them in such a meagre sense was a proof how callous was his conscience, and how defective his spiritual apprehension. Had that apprehension been more correct, and that conscience more tender, he would have known that the thought of wickedness is sin; and he would have felt that the imagination of his heart had been only evil continually; and that life on which he plumed himself as a succession of virtues would have darkened into a sad series of sins. He would have been in the situation which the apostle Paul afterwards so graphically described as his own. Like a man in a pestilent season who is told that the plague-spot has appeared on his countenance, and he feels so well that he will not believe it. However, being told to look into the glass, for a moment he glances into a dim mirror, or a mirror in a dusky chamber, and protests that he can see nothing wrong. But his informant comes in, and pulls open a shutter, and lets in a clearer light, or brushes the dust from the face of the mirror; and lo! large and livid on his darkening brow the sentence of approaching death. Saul the moralist once would not believe that there was aught amiss in his

character. He felt alive and well, and trusted that he was good enough to be going to heaven. He looked into the law, and, like this young man, declared sincerely, "All these have I kept." But whilst he was still gazing into the dusty glass, and saying to himself, "I am whole and need no physician," of a sudden the Spirit of God let in a flood of light, and at the same moment the tenth commandment brushed the film from the face of the mirror, and showed him swarms of evil thoughts and unholy wishes; and oh! what an altered man he saw himself. What a leprous and plague-stricken soul he saw his own to be! What a doomed and death-stricken spirit he felt it! And how when that one commandment came, sin was vivified; his real character was revealed, and the self-justifying legalist "died"!

But when the Saviour sent this youth to the mirror the dust was on it, and the room was dark. With perfect sincerity, but sadly mistaking, he reported, "All these have I kept." And this fatal error frustrated all the rest. Feeling no need of an atoning sacrifice, or a Divine forgiveness, there was no reason why he should take up the cross and follow Jesus. He was not, to his own sensations at least, one of those lost ones, whom the Friend of sinners came to seek and to save.

And doubtless, it still is this which makes many stop short of the Saviour. They see no sin in themselves; or, at all events, no sin that is damnable. They allow that they are infirm and imperfect, and that like all other people, they have their faults and their short-comings. But anything so atrocious as to merit the Divine dis-

pleasure, they deprecate and disown, for, honestly, they cannot discover it.

The young man was aware of no short-coming, no transgression; and, although the first table of the law had next been held up, he could have viewed himself in it with equal complacency. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, and such is the deadness of conscience till quickened by the Spirit of God! But, suppose that at this point it had flashed on his conviction, "All these have I misunderstood and mismanaged from my youth. I have kept them not to God, but to myself. My good deeds have been put together like so many dead and disjointed sticks to make rounds in a ladder that would reach up to heaven; they have not grown like green branches spontaneous and beautiful from a living tree, the root of which was love to God and my neighbour. I have been a mere selfist, living for men's praise, living for my own interest or indulgence; and if God has been sometimes in my thoughts He has been seldom in my heart: He has been to me the hard task-master instead of the dear Father and the gracious Sovereign; and, whilst He has been shut out from my heart, I have tried to propitiate Him by a quit-rent handed forth from the window, by a few good words spoken in prayer, a few coins given away in alms or cast into the treasury. O Master, canst thou replace the living God in a worldling's soul? Is there any pardon for my long impiety? Canst thou teach me to love the Lord God with all my heart and mind?" Suppose that this had been the bitter cry awakened by his conscious emptiness, he was now in the

presence of one who could abundantly comfort. He had come to consult one who could not only pardon the past, but in whose society he might soon have recovered the lost secret of Paradise, and learned to delight in the living God as a Father and a Friend. Nay, little as he surmised it, that "good Master" was Himself the "good God;" and in following Jesus, frequenting His society, listening to His words, imbibing His dispositions, he would have been daily more and more weaned from self-seeking and self-dependence, and would have been trained and educated back again into that filial spirit which was the spirit of unfallen Adam, and which is eternal life already begun in the soul.

2. Having failed by His question to reveal to His visitor the plague of his own heart, the Saviour told him to do a thing which would show him the strength of his besetting sin. The Saviour first held up the mirror of the commands that he might see himself guilty; He now touched the chain of his peculiar carnality, that he might perceive himself a slave and a prisoner. Amidst all his amiability and engaging attributes the Lord Jesus knew that he was worldly-minded. He had his treasure on earth. He was not so intent on God's friendship that he would give up all things for it; but he had so much thoughtfulness and foresight, that along with an earthly present, he desired a heavenly future; he would like the pleasures of sense now, and the joys of glory in reversion. And he hoped that perhaps the Great Teacher might put him on a plan for combining both. But aware of his propensity Jesus said at once, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way,

sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow me." "You want to inherit eternal life. Well, the way to inherit it is to begin it here. Make God your highest good and chiefest joy, and your eternal life is begun already. But you are not doing that. Your treasure is not in heaven, but here; your treasure is your farm and your fine estate. God is saying to you, My son, give me thine heart; but you give that heart to your property. These great possessions are your god. You live and move for them, and your being is bound up in them. Can you part with them, and take God for your portion? Can you live by faith? Canst thou sell all that thou hast, and, like myself and my followers, live on the daily providence of God?" "Sell whatsoever thou hast!" The thing was not to be thought of. Treasure in heaven was good, but treasure on earth was indispensable. So, grieved at the sentence, sorry that the terms were so severe, sorry that the response of Jesus was so plain and so absolute; sorry to have all the hopes of the past and the plans of that morning dashed by one hard saying, he slowly turned him round and "went away."

Went away! He *came* running. His steps were light and eager then; for he almost hoped that he was about to find the pearl of great price, and that that very day he might carry salvation back to his house. But all that was over now; and sure we are he was not running when he went away. The woman at Jacob's well *ran* when she hasted to tell her neighbours that she had found the Christ; but the neighbours who saw the ruler wending

back to his abode, might see that he had lost something. Yes! he had lost his day of grace. He had lost his golden opportunity for obtaining eternal life. If he had known the gift of God, and who it was that said to him, "Sell what thou hast," he would have done it on the spot, and on the spot Jesus would have given him treasure in heaven. But that opportunity was gone. Jesus returned to that region no more. He was going to Jerusalem. He was travelling to the Cross. His earthly journeys were well-nigh ended, and that particular road He should traverse no more. Ah, no! amiable but misguided young man! The moment is passed. Jesus has gone one way, and thou hast gone another; and ere noon the Friend of sinners will be far from these domains. But surely thou never canst forget the interview of this morning. When thou art grown old and miserly, when thou hast lost the simplicity and warmth which for the present redeem thy worldliness, and when no friends are near thee except on-hangers scrambling for thy great possessions, perhaps thou mayest recall this morning, and sigh to think that a Friend in heaven and treasure there were once within thine offer! And sure enough thou wilt remember it one day. There were no prints in His hands and feet with whom thou didst part this morning, nor was there any crown upon His brow. But there will be when thou seest Him again. That Jesus who passed near thy house this morning will be the crucified, the glorified, when next He meets thine eyes; and He who this morning loved thee as the Son of Man, will that day judge thee as the Son of God. By that time thou shalt be where great

possessions cannot profit, but where the bargains of time cannot be recalled. The man Christ Jesus looked at thee lovingly this morning; but how will Jehovah the Judge look at thee then? at the man who had salvation in his offer, but refused it? at the man who preferred a few acres of earth to treasure in heaven? at the man who chose to have all his good things below? at the man who, when the Saviour said, "Follow me," went away?

1. From this affecting history we see how far people may go, and yet fall short of heaven. This youth was orthodox, moral, and engaging; but he lacked one thing: he lacked the new heart; he lacked that lowly mind which sees its guilt and vileness; that trustful mind which is ready to forsake all and follow Jesus; that renovated mind to which righteousness is meat and drink, and the sense of God's favour the chiefest joy.

And perhaps our young reader may have gone as far. You are correct and well conducted; you pray, and read the Bible. Your friends see your sweetness of disposition and the mildness of your manners; but do you love the Lord Jesus? Have you intrusted to Him your soul's salvation? Are you ready to part with anything which He bids you renounce? And are you so devoted to His service, that you are not ashamed to be known as His disciple, as a member of His Church, and as a separatist from a sinful world? Are you willing to take up the cross and follow Christ?

2. And you see how wise it is to abandon at once anything which hinders your salvation. There may be money in the purse, and yet no idolatry of money in the heart.

Abraham, and David, and Daniel had "great possessions," and yet they got to heaven; and, after this, Cornelius and the Ethiopian treasurer, and Gaius, and Joseph of Arimathea, in "entering the kingdom," took their riches along with them, and used them profitably in the service of their Saviour and their brethren. But the Lord Jesus saw that the plague of this ruler's heart was avarice, or the worship of wealth. He saw that he was in the bond of the same iniquity which made Demas go back to the world, and which turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt. And, not because there is anything sinful in property, but because to this avaricious youth his property would prove a perpetual snare—because, in his case, to part with it would be the surest sign of his present sincerity and the greatest help to his future consistency, the Lord Jesus insisted on its entire and instant surrender.

In like manner, whatever stands in the way of your salvation, be it something positively sinful, or something lawful idolized, that is the thing which the Lord Jesus bids you abandon. There is nothing sinful in music; but we have read of instances where music was a mania; where, like a possession, it carried its victims to all company, however unsuitable, and detained them at all hours, however unseasonable; and when they became supremely anxious about the "one thing," they found it needful to enforce a rigid abstinence from their favourite enjoyment. There is nothing sinful in a little wine, but if that little create a wish for more, and the man finds that his growing love for strong drink will stand betwixt him and the hope of salvation, he would be a wise man never to taste it

again so long as the world standeth. And whatever it be which you find the great obstacle to Christian decision,—play-going, novel-reading, frivolous company, the race-course, the ball-room, the card-table,—we shall not now dispute about its abstract lawfulness; we only ask, Is that habit so powerful, that even for Christ and for heaven you cannot give it up? Is that propensity so strong, that this day, when the Saviour says, "Arise, and follow me," you cannot comply, because something else has a stronger hold upon you, and compels you to go away exceeding sorrowful?

IV.

A YOUNG MAN WHO LEFT ALL AND FOLLOWED JESUS.

On the western side of the Lake of Galilee there was a cluster of thriving little villages; and although the inhabitants did not depend entirely on the lake for their subsistence, yet most of them were at least occasionally fishermen. Amongst the rest there was a good man who was better off than some of his fellow-townsmen; for he not only had a craft of his own, but could hire servants to man it; and we afterwards find that members of his family were acquainted with the best society in Jerusalem. In his substantial and comfortable abode this worthy citizen had a pious wife called Salome, and two sons whose names were James and John. It is a short sketch of the younger which we here purpose to give.

We know little of his early days, but they would doubtless resemble the early days of neighbour-children. He would launch his tiny skiff on the waters of the lake, and would deem it grand promotion when allowed to go out with the men in the pinnace. In all the pride of conscious usefulness, he would bail out the water, and bait the hooks, and the first time that his own line quivered with a scaly captive, he would hurry it up hand over

hand, and flush with elation as it jumped and floundered in the hold—the fairest and most precious of fishes. And by and by he felt it romantic to spend the whole night on the water, furling the sail on that eerie eastern shore; and as he lay watching the buoys in the moonlight, he would sometimes hear the howl of the wolf, or the laugh of the hyæna up among the tombs, or would see capering along the coast the frantic demoniac. But the Sabbath came, and not a sail was stirring on all those peaceful waters. It was the day which God had made, and it was given to devotion. With his father, and mother, and brother, John went to the synagogue, and listened to some rabbi expounding the Law, and was sometimes promoted to read a long passage himself to the village assembly. And when that service was ended, he came home, and either under the fig-tree or in the alcove on the top of the house, gazing away over the green acres on towards the snowy peaks of Hermon, he allowed his imagination to wander at will. And though we do not know what led to it, we know that the youth began to think about his soul. Perhaps it was the conversation of his pious mother, whose spirit was intent on the consolation of Israel; perhaps it was the striking scenes he witnessed in his first journey to Jerusalem—the scape-goat, the paschal lamb, and the daily sacrifice, and all that great dramatic sermon on the subject of sin and atonement which in the Holy City Jehovah preached to His peculiar people. But, at all events, the youth grew thoughtful. He had committed no gross or open crime, and yet he felt himself none the less a sinner. And hearing that a great preacher had

appeared in the south country, John set out to attend his ministry.

When he came to the spot he found a great concourse. Indeed, with its long-robed lawyers and its steel-clad soldiers; with its silken ladies and its swarthy boors; with its tents, and its hucksters, and its sumpter-asses, the place looked like a great civic encampment, or a town turned out on the meadows. As he crossed the ferry, and pushing up through the oleanders and sedges joined the crowd beside the river, the young pilgrim was arrested by a conspicuous figure,—a meagre weather-beaten man, with head uncovered, and with a mantle of coarse camel's hair. The throng hung enchained on his thrilling tones, and stood revealed to his bright flashing eye. He was proclaiming the near approach of Messiah, and was putting it to his audience if they were really prepared for the arrival of one so holy and so divine—one who would only gather wheat into His garner, and from the flap of whose winnowing-fan hypocrisy would fly away like chaff from the tempest. And as he marshalled up the ten commands, each stepped forth as a stern accuser, and shook its head so ominously that self-complacency sunk back into itself, and the gayest trifler was fain to cry, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Prodigious is the force of earnest words. Hardly yet had the Holy Ghost been given; but such was the mastery over men imparted to the Baptist by loyalty to God and outspoken fearlessness, that frivolity grew serious and pride crest-fallen. And, as a confession of the polluted past and a promise of a holier future, there was hardly one who did not pass through the

cleansing ordeal, and entering by the door of water-baptism, assume an expectant attitude towards the approaching kingdom.

To understand the sequel, we may assume that John even now possessed those attributes of character which he afterwards abundantly exhibited—a contemplative turn, candour, and acquaintance with Scripture. There is a certain delicacy of scriptural allusion, a certain dexterity in quoting it, which, just like the choice idioms and elegant felicities of a man speaking his native tongue rather than one acquired late in life, betoken a deep and early acquaintance with the books of the Bible; and in such profound quotations and recondite allusions John's writings abound, giving us reason to believe that in his Galilean home he had studied betimes Moses and the prophets.[1] And what he perused he pondered. He was a man of meditation—a man to whom thought was an enjoyment—reflection and reasoning the repose of his spirit. But though a thinker, he was not constitutionally a sceptic. Without prejudice, and without precipitation, he had a mind prepared to yield to evidence—that frank and limpid nature, through which, as through the clear fountain or the crystal window, the rays of truth find ready transit.

With this Bible knowledge, this thoughtfulness, this candour, it was hardly possible for John to hearken to the Baptist without being deeply convinced of his lost estate, and without listening eagerly to what the speaker

[1] See *The Four Witnesses* of Da Costa (a most profound and æsthetic analysis of the characteristics of the four Evangelists), pp. 265-7.

added about that Greater than himself, who was coming to take away the sin of the world. On a Gentile, or an ignorant Jew, the words might have fallen pointless; but in the alert spirit of John they touched a hundred chords, and awakened countless echoes; and his whole nature was in that stir of expectation which precedes a moral revolution, when one day, wistfully gazing at a stranger who seemed to be passing by, the Baptist exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" and, impelled by some Divine attraction, the young Galilean and his companion followed, and joyfully embracing the invitation which Jesus gave them, tarried all night beneath the roof where He at that time sojourned.

We love to recall our first interview with a great benefactor, or with the friend who has formed a chief ingredient in our earthly happiness; but no such date can be so memorable as a man's first acquaintance with his Saviour. And yet it is characteristic of this apostle's retiring disposition and sensitive nature, that of all which transpired on that memorable evening, he has not recorded one syllable. A little later, he tells us what passed in a similar interview with Nicodemus; and as far as relates to God's love to the world, and the lifting up of the Son of Man, it is likely that what was said to John and his companion was substantially the same. And though we confess to disappointed curiosity, though it would have been not a little instructive to know what were the words which first satisfied an intellect so superior, and which first arrested a heart so loving, we

must be satisfied with the result which was next morning announced to their friends in words so few but emphatic, "We have found the Messias."

And here we cannot forbear a parenthetic observation. Some natures are effusive and outspoken. When they find the lost sheep, or the lost shekel, they call on their friends and neighbours to share the joy, and they cannot rest till they have relieved their grateful emotion by crying, "All ye that love the Lord, come and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." Like John Newton, they cannot forbear, but they must tell to every hearer what miracles of mercy they are, and they write a book to record how they were snatched from the fearful pit and the miry clay; whilst others, no less affected by God's goodness, feel with Cowper—

> "Nor were it wise, nor should I choose
> Such secrets to declare:
> Like precious wines, their taste they lose
> Exposed to open air."

Like John, they shrink from publicity; and it is not by telling to the Church, or even to their friends, the story of their conversion, but it is by the way they speak and act for Christ, that the world is apprised of their great discovery, and the consequent revolution in their characters.

And this, we believe, is all which even the Church is entitled to demand. For whilst, on the one hand, there may be an explicitness which is aught but egotism—whilst to a frank and exuberant spirit it may feel like coldness or cowardice to conceal the doing of the Lord, another may revolt from any recital of his own experience

as verging on vain-glory, or as a self-exhibition at once unseemly and distasteful. And if we are thankful to Paul, who repeats again and again the incidents of his conversion, the example of John may teach us that we are not entitled to constitute ourselves fathers-confessors, and force into a full and particular statement of their experience those who would rather "keep the matter in their heart."

John went back to Bethsaida. He went back to Zebedee and the fishing-boat—to his old friends and his former avocation; and had Christ not summoned him to a higher calling, he would have done well to abide as he was to the end of his days. And, with the consciousness which he now possessed, John might have led on that lake of Galilee an existence happier and more sublime than Seneca was then spending in his cedar library, or Tiberius in his glittering palace. "The mind is its own place;" and just as shabby notions and mean projects may nestle beneath a coronet, so heaven's heir-apparent is sometimes attired in coarsest raiment, and is holding fellowship with God even when it is a sorry employment in which his fingers are engaged. And should the reader be one whose outward lot is little in unison with his intellectual or moral aspirations—like John after that night with Jesus at Bethabara, should you be obliged to return to a companionship as contracted and to a calling as irksome as awaited the young disciple on Gennesareth:—remember that John and a few friends like-minded have thrown around the once obscure lake of Galilee and the humble craft of the fisherman associations almost amount-

ing to sacredness: and if your vocation is too lowly to elevate you, be you yourself so conscientious, so pure and noble-hearted, so full of Christ, as to leave that calling the more dignified because it is the one which you once occupied.

But John was not destined to tarry many months amongst his old neighbours and their work. Although it is well for us that there is One who foresees all our future and who knows the way which we take, it is well for us that we do not know it ourselves: and so, by short and gentle stages, with seldom more than one trial in any single vista, and usually with many sweet beguilements by the way, we are lured along till our generation is served and the work which God has given us is done. At the moment when Jesus called himself and his brother, could it have been revealed to John, "He is calling you to sixty years of wandering and exile: Bethsaida will never more be your home. He is calling you to poverty and reproach: you will never be able to add another mite to your patrimony, and you will often be treated as an impostor or a fool. If you quit this boat and follow that man, you will land in a prison and on a rock of lonely banishment: I will not say but you may find yourself at last in the tyrant's grip, flung into the seething caldron, or shut up in the lions' den:"—we dare not say that he would have been so daunted as to refuse to go, but he would have gone with a very different feeling from that which now bore him over the vessel's side, and placed him a recruit instant and joyful in Messiah's little retinue. No —those days beside the Jordan and that night in Christ's

own dwelling, were still vivid to his memory, and the hope of others like them was a spell before which home-ties dissolved and danger disappeared: and, in the kind wisdom of the Master, fresh excitements and new requitals so succeeded one another; and in the disclosures of a more intimate communion, the great original motive—love to Christ—so deepened, that John was never tempted for a moment to regret that day's decision. He heard the Sermon on the Mount. He saw Jairus's daughter raised to life, and the widow's son at Nain. He helped to feed with the miraculous loaves the famished multitude. He shared, in some degree, the love and gratitude which gathered round his Master as the Healer of diseases and the Forgiver of sins. He was with Jesus on the Holy Mount. He was with Him in the guest-chamber. He was with Him in Gethsemane. He was with Him in the hall of the palace of his friend the high priest. He was with Him upon Calvary: in the upper room: on Olivet. And after the Saviour had gone hence, the mother of Jesus was still with John. And then, though persecution came, Pentecost was also come; and though Jesus was gone, the Holy Ghost was given. And though sorrow came after sorrow—though James was slain with the sword, and though Jerusalem, with all its endearments, had to be left behind, yet success followed success, and Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Thyatira, "Gaius, mine host," and Demetrius, were antidotes to overmuch sorrow, and incentives to renewed exertion;—even as it will be with ourselves, when God calls us to any great or good undertaking. Could we realize beforehand the opposition, the

obloquy, the fatigue, the misconstruction, the wakeful nights, the weary, jaded days—were the real difficulties present to our mind in all their force, we should be very apt to linger in the boat and continue mending our nets, even after Jesus had said, "Arise, follow me." But these trials are, in great mercy, hidden at the moment when the one mighty motive is working; and when they do arise, they so alternate with gracious encouragements—when one friend gives way, another is so opportunely raised up; when the home-scene is dark, such good news comes from elsewhere; when some effort proves abortive on which prodigious pains were expended, such unaccountable success crowns another, that, like the soldier who in the morning's victory forgets the rainy bivouac of last night, and all his projects of returning, the chivalrous believer resumes the fight, and, like John in his long campaign of seventy years, is always committing himself to new labours of love, "faint, yet pursuing;" and when he drops at last, his attitude is onward, and the position where he falls is in advance of the ground where he rested yesterday.

When Noah lifted the hatch, and looked out at the window of his ark, he saw quite another world from that which he had looked upon when God shut the door and closed him in. It was a world where he would meet none of his old neighbours—where the old subjects of engrossing speculation would have ceased to interest—where the old scenes would wear a new aspect—where old things were passed away, and all things were become new. Noah had seen an old world die, and a new world born.

When John took his last look from the craggy heights

of Patmos, he was a patriarch gazing from the summit of a moral Ararat. It was not that outward nature had made a change; for the evening sun wheeled gloriously down on the far western waves, and the mighty Mediterranean still swept his azure billows along the bleak ribs of Patmos, or went to sleep on the snowy sands of its sheltered bay. With its garland of glossy green, the Christmas rose still crowned the rocks where the sea-gull nestled, as it had crowned them centuries ago; and the ships of Tarshish were seen glancing and tacking in the far offing, as they had done when Jonah was the passenger, and Hiram was the sailor king. All these things continued as they were when the fathers fell asleep; but other things were changed. Had the apostle's eye been keen enough to penetrate so far, from the top of the rock he might have seen Jerusalem a desolate heap—those streets which, when first he trod them, stirred and buzzed with countless myriads, abandoned to the vulture, and the beautiful temple a pile of smashed pillars and scorched timbers, rendering the old ritual of Solomon and Moses a desperate impossibility. Northward he might have looked, and his own seven churches would have risen to his view; and westward Corinth with its Christian congregations, and Rome with its saints in Cæsar's household. With scarce a land that did not contain its Christian worshippers, with scarce a tongue in which the name of Jesus had not been proclaimed, with that old dispensation departed, and with the idols of heathendom trembling in every shrine—in that destruction of guilty and doomed Jerusalem, in that infeoffment already taken in His purchased

heritage, the heathen—John felt that, if this were not all the coming of his Master which he had reason to expect, it was all for which the disciple could patiently wait; and, with old associations revived by these apocalyptic visions, and old affections burning afresh, he wished that his dear Lord would come and take him to Himself. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus; come quickly."

We do not know the particulars of John's dying hours. Early church history tells us that it was a peaceful death. He did not die a martyr, as his own brother did. No Herod spilled his blood. We do not know the place. Like Moses' grave, no man knows for certain where he is buried to this day. Nor are we told who surrounded his dying bed. There is only one Friend who we know for certain was there. And, reader, if you be a disciple, Jesus will be at your bedside when you come to die. It may be in a Patmos—a land of distance or exile; or an Ephesus—a place where Christian friends will come to see you, and where the congregation in which you were wont to worship will remember you when it meets to pray. It may be in a quiet chamber, where loving relatives stand by; or in a lonely unplenished room, where a kind neighbour looks in now and then to see if you are wanting anything. Salome and James may have gone before; your mother and your brethren may no longer be with you: but, whoever dies, the Lord Jesus lives; and if you be His disciple, you will not depart in solitude. Jesus will be with you. And once you have fallen asleep, your very dust will not be neglected nor forgotten. The Saviour will watch over it till that bright morrow when He shall

draw the blue curtain of these skies, and, revealing a sun which never sets, shall arouse you all recruited for the sleepless services of eternity.

There were many fishermen on the Lake of Galilee, and many young men in the village of Bethsaida, who never became Christ's disciples. And there was once a time when nothing was further from the thoughts of John. When Salome dandled him on her knee; when, with his older brother and the neighbour children, he played up and down the steep street of Bethsaida; when, in the winter months, he left the village to look at the swellings of Jordan, as, in volumes of foaming ochre, it rolled and tumbled into the flooded lake; and when, a limber lad, he shoved afloat the boat of Zebedee, grating along the gravel, and then leaped in and dealt out the net, and laid him down to be rocked asleep on the swinging waves;—amongst all his dreams he never dreamed of a day which would see him a fisher of men, and one of the dearest friends of Messiah. But that same Saviour who said to John, "Arise, follow me," invites you, dear young reader, to become His disciple. Be you as ingenuous, as obedient, as prompt, and as loving, and you too will become as lovely, as beloved. It is a wonderful invitation, but it is real. It comes from the Saviour who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and it is an invitation which is echoed in the last words of this happy Evangelist, who closes the canon of Scripture entreating all to come and share the blessedness which he had never wholly lacked since the day when he first beheld "the Lamb of God." The Saviour invites you to arise and follow Him;

and, amidst all the possibilities opened to you in that high calling, do you pray and aspire to become "a beloved disciple." Like John, who, amidst the confidential communings of the guest-chamber, the affectionate homage of the seven churches, the transporting revelations of Patmos, could remember the day when the scaly planks of a fishing-boat were his bed, and a coil of dripping ropes was his pillow, and when he had few hopes or aspirations beyond his native village,—you know not what great things you are yet to see. But of all spectacles the greatest is Jesus himself. That sight, dwelt upon by John's adoring and absorbing eyes, filled his mind for the rest of life with a beatific vision of "God manifest," and it came out again in a character so elevated and beautiful, that the whole Church is now of the same mind with the Master; it loves the disciple whom Jesus loved, and recognises as the most Christlike of all Christ's friends, John the Divine.

FINAL GLIMPSES.

THE RISEN REDEEMER.

THE great sacrifice had been offered. The Son of God had exclaimed, "It is finished," and had given up the ghost. Availing themselves of Pilate's permission, Joseph and Nicodemus had taken down the body of Jesus, and had deposited it in a tomb lately hewn out of the rock in Joseph's garden. It was the eve of the Sabbath, and the stars would soon be shining, after which no work could be done. Their arrangements were therefore hasty; but they took time to wrap round the precious remains a hundred pounds of spices, and then rolled a great stone to the door. The Jewish rulers suggested to Pilate, that perhaps the disciples might come and carry off the body; and to obviate this danger the stone was fastened with seals, and a Roman guard set over it.

That night passed on, and nothing transpired. The next day was hushed and holy—the most sacred of Israel's Sabbaths; and within and around the sepulchre all continued as calm and silent as the smokeless city. The Sabbath-day passed over, and soon after six at night certain women purchased some spices, and agreed to meet

at the sepulchre early on the following morning. Joanna and some others were to prepare the perfumes; but before Joanna and her companions arrived, Mary the mother of James, and Mary Magdalene, and Salome, set out to explore the sepulchre. Probably they knew nothing of the guard, but they wished to know whether it were practicable to remove the great stone. But before they could arrive, there had been a mighty movement at the sepulchre. "There was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." As soon as they recovered from their consternation, the guard ran to the rulers; and in the meanwhile the female disciples drew near to the garden. As soon as they entered it, and whilst they were speculating how the stone might be moved away, to their consternation they perceived that it was already displaced, and the sepulchre was open. Instantly conjecturing that His enemies had removed the body, perhaps to insult and maltreat it, Mary Magdalene hasted off to give the alarm to Peter and John. Meanwhile, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, went forward and saw an angel in the form of a young man, sitting on the right side of the tomb, who said to them, "Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. Behold the place where they laid him." "And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and that he goeth before you into Galilee."

On hearing Magdalene's report, John and Peter instantly set out, and Magdalene along with them: but owing to their different routes they did not meet Salome and her companion returning. John outran Peter, and first reached the sepulchre: but whilst he was looking in Peter came up, and, with characteristic impetuosity, sprang in at once. There lay the napkin carefully folded, and the shroud disposed by itself; and it did not at all appear as if either friends or foes had hastily borne away the body. Peter and John went back to their own home, and Mary Magdalene was left alone in the garden. And thus left alone, she drew near, and with tears in her eyes looked into the sepulchre. There two angels were sitting—the one at the head, the other at the feet—where the body of Jesus had lain. She took them for two young men, and when they asked, "Woman, why weepest thou?" she answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Just then, turning round, a figure stood before her. Her eyes dim with weeping, she supposed it was the gardener, and encouraged by the kind way he asked, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" she said, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." But instantly, in tones which belonged to one voice only, the Stranger answered, "Mary!" and as she sank at His feet, He added, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And before more words could pass, He disappeared and met Salome and

the other Mary, and accosted them, "All hail!" and clasping His feet they worshipped Him, whilst He renewed the message of the angels, "Be not afraid: Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee: there shall they see me."

That same morning He appeared to Peter, and in the afternoon, when two disciples—not apostles—were journeying to a town eight miles from Jerusalem, Jesus joined them. They were talking together, and as it was plain that their theme was a sad one, the Stranger asked what it was. They told Him that they had counted on Jesus of Nazareth as the Redeemer of Israel,—but that He had been slain three days ago: moreover, that to-day they had been greatly perplexed by a rumour that His tomb was empty, and that no one was there except angels, who said that He was alive again. A long discourse ensued, during which the Stranger demonstrated out of the prophets that all this was the plan of God, and that these were precisely the sufferings through which Messiah should pass before He entered His glory. Whether it were that His attire or His aspect was somewhat different from what it used to be; or whether the melancholy absorption of their thoughts prevented them from sufficiently noticing their new companion; or whether—as seems hinted in the narrative—Jesus purposely held their eyes from recognising Him:—still they journeyed mile after mile, conscious only of their fellow-traveller's sanctity and marvellous insight into Scripture, till they reached their dwelling, and as He blessed their meal and broke the bread, their eyes were opened, and they knew

Him: but before they could follow up the transporting discovery, He had "ceased to be seen of them"[1]—He had vanished out of their sight. With news so surprising they sped all the sixty furlongs back to Jerusalem, and told the Eleven, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon, and to us." That evening, as the Eleven were assembled in an upper room, with the doors securely fastened for fear of the Jews, Jesus stood in the midst and said, "Peace be unto you:"—but they shrieked out and held up their hands, as if in the presence of an apparition. But Jesus said, "Why are ye troubled? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." And while they yet believed not for joy, He asked, "Have ye here any meat?" and when they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb, He took it and did eat before them. He then reminded them —as He truly might—how often He had foretold His sufferings Himself, and how Messiah's temporary death had been predicted in the Prophets and the Psalms: "Thus it behoved Messiah to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day."

A week passed on before He was seen again. On the last occasion one apostle was absent; and though his brethren told him what a long and ample interview they had enjoyed with their risen Master, he sturdily refused to believe them. After all, it must have been an apparition, and "except I shall see in his hands the prints of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the

[1] ἄφαντος ἐγένετο ἀπ' αὐτῶν, Luke xxiv. 31.

nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Next Sunday the apostles were met as before, with bolted doors, and this time Thomas was with them. Again Jesus stood in the midst, and after the salutation, "Peace be unto you!" turning to Thomas, He said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." But yielding to the irresistible evidence, and overwhelmed with this token of his heart-searching Master's omniscience, Thomas could only exclaim, "My Lord, and my God!"

Most likely it was that same week that the apostles went into Galilee, as they had been directed to do; and here they probably had repeated interviews with their Master, and learned from His own lips many things concerning His kingdom. But only two of these Galilean interviews are recorded. The first was by the Lake of Gennesareth, early on a morning of that wonderful spring. Peter, and Thomas, and James, and John, and Nathanael the guileless, and two other disciples, were in a fishing craft. They had been very unsuccessful—for they had toiled all night and taken nothing. They were now nearing the shore, when they saw some one standing on the beach. He hailed them, and asked if they had any food. They answered, None. He bade them cast the net on the right side of the ship; which they had no sooner done, than they found it so full that they could not hoist it on board. With his own sure instinct, John said to Peter, "It is the Lord;" and no sooner was the truth suggested, than Peter plunged over the vessel's side,

and swam the two hundred cubits to the shore. There they found a repast prepared, and there, as they had often done of old, on the margin of that same lake, these seven listened to the Master's words, as they brake their bread together. The other appearance in Galilee was on a mountain, perhaps Tabor, perhaps the Mount of Beatitudes; at all events, a mountain where He had appointed to meet the eleven, and where, taking advantage of the appointment, five hundred brethren came together to see Him, of whom the greater part survived full twenty years, and were living when Paul wrote his first letter to the Church of Corinth. In that interview—most likely in private, and apart from the multitude—Jesus told His apostles that all power was given to Him in heaven and earth, and He bade them go and teach all nations whatsoever things He had commanded them, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and He added, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

From Galilee the apostles were directed to return to Jerusalem. There, forty days after His resurrection, Jesus joined them, and led them out a favourite and familiar walk over the shoulder of Olivet as far as to Bethany. They crossed the brook Kedron; for the last time together they passed near Gethsemane; they came in sight of the house where Lazarus dwelt with his sisters Martha and Mary. But to all the incidents of that touching past Jesus made no allusion. His discourse was of such great themes as the coming of the Holy Spirit and the extension of God's kingdom in the

earth. An inquiry, as to whether He meant now to restore the Jewish monarchy, He discouraged; but bade the disciples preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations. And as they, doubtless, felt their deplorable incompetency, He bade them tarry at Jerusalem till they received the promise of the Father; for "not many days hence ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." And then—a last look of love, and a final blessing, and He was ascending from their midst; and anon, when the cloud had received Him, and the angels told them that no gaze of fondness could make Him visible again, they poured forth their adoration in an act of worship; and, slowly wending back to Jerusalem, and to that dear upper chamber, they began the life of faith, and sought to realize the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway."

On the wonderful sequel we cannot dwell. We must not now stay to relate how a few weeks converted into heroes and orators the ignorant boors and aimless fishermen of Galilee; and how, from the dim, cold cavern of Jewish sectarianism, they suddenly issued on the world the most original reformers, the most expansive philanthropists, the most fervent evangelists, which that world has ever seen; how, in the very streets where their Master had been slain not two months previously, they proclaimed His resurrection and His Messiahship; and the rulers beat them, and threatened them, but could not contradict their testimony, nor ventured to bring forward the Roman guards to confute them; how they confirmed their avowal of Christ's resurrection, by submitting to tortures, and imprisonments, and fearful forms

of death; and how God also confirmed their testimony; how, when they invoked the name of Jesus of Nazareth, lame men leaped up, and sick folk were healed; and how, in their great business of preaching a risen Christ, the Holy Spirit helped them, so that, whilst all the languages of earth became easy as their own vernacular, their thoughts glowed like lightning, and their words thawed like fire; how the first time they announced their great news, "Him whom with wicked hands ye crucified and slew, God hath raised up, and hath made Him Lord and Christ," the incidents all were recent, the immediate scene was only a few hundred paces distant, and their hearers had many of them been spectators of the crucifixion, but three thousand at once became the converts of the Crucified; and all throughout till, on the road to Damascus, Jesus arrested His greatest persecutor, and changed him into His most ardent devotee, how all the intervening incidents proclaimed a risen and enthroned Redeemer, we must not at present detail more fully; but shall conclude by indicating some of the results which follow from Christ's Resurrection.

1. It was as our Surety that Jesus died and was buried; and it was as our Surety that Jesus rose. His resurrection proves that His atoning work had served its purpose, and that the great Redemption was complete. The wages of sin was death. On behalf of His people, Jesus had tasted death; and now, as there was nothing more to pay, the prison was opened and the Surety was released. "God raised Him from the dead," and in thus raising to life the Substitute of the elect,

God openly acknowledged that their debt was discharged—their penalty exhausted—their expiation complete. It might have been otherwise. We speak of things that are strong: There is nothing stronger than justice. We speak of things that are heavy: There is nothing heavier than guilt. And had Jesus been a human Saviour, He would have been crushed by the responsibilities He assumed, and must have perished in His benevolent undertaking. The sins of any one of us would have been a gravestone too heavy for Him to heave off: the claims of Jehovah's justice would have been bands of death too strong for even Him to burst. But before He descended to the tomb Messiah had finished transgression and made an end of sin. There was nothing to take Him thither, except the Scripture which must be fulfilled, and the last enemy which must be destroyed; and except the great stone and the pontifical seals, there was nothing to keep Him there. Vainly did the King of Terrors watch over his strange captive, and vainly did the Grave boast of its mysterious and mighty inmate. He opened His eyes and Death was abolished: He stood up, and the Grave had lost its victory; and yielding to the touch of Heaven's herald, the seals and the great stone gave way, and Jesus was "declared the Son of God with power in His resurrection from the dead." Delivered for our offences, He was raised again for our justification: and along with Him rose all His ransomed—that glorious Church of countless members which left the grave of Jesus acquitted, accepted, legally justified, virtually saved. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

2. Christ rose as a precursor or earnest. Christ is risen the first-fruits of them that sleep. All shall rise. "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." But whilst all the dead are the subjects of the Mediator's authority, and all are destined to hear His voice, there is a special relation betwixt Himself and His believing people which identifies their lot with their risen Redeemer. Because He lives, they shall live also. Nay, believing in Him they never die. From the great life-fountain, the Mediator's person, their souls have imbibed immortality, and their union with Christ secures them an eventual share in Christ's own resurrection. All that are in their graves shall hear Christ's voice; but Christians in the grave are not dead, but only sleeping: and whether in the grave or going to it, they are not only hearers of Christ's voice, but sharers of Christ's vitality.

Of this implication of all His people in Christ's resurrection, the apostle Paul gives a twofold illustration. He calls the rising Redeemer "the first-fruits of them that sleep"—and he calls Him "a quickening spirit." The first-fruits were the handful of corn which first ripened in the field, or the first cluster which ripened on the tree, and which was not only often the richest in itself, but

peculiarly welcome as announcing that the rest is coming. And so of that corn which has fallen into the ground and died, the handful first ripe has already gone home to God's garner, and tells that the rest will follow; and though the remainder does not mature with the same miraculous rapidity, not a grain shall be lost. Time's winter and the tears of separation have fallen over it like a dew upon herbs, and still it dwells in dust; but these heavens shall open, and earth's atmosphere shall thrill with issuing immortality, and conscious of the quickening presence, the dwellers in the dust shall awake and sing,—together with Christ's dead body shall they come—together with His dead body, and made blissfully like to His glorious body,—and in that instantaneous maturing the first-fruits are repeated over all the golden field, and the harvest of the earth is reaped. Again, as in Adam all the Adamic die, so in Christ all the Christian live. Those who have the blood of Adam in their veins have the mortality of Adam in their systems: those who have the spirit of Jesus in their souls, bear about with them the germ of a better resurrection. Each Adam is a representative; each is a public person; each is a covenant head; each has his own posterity. In Adam all die. His first sin brought death on himself and all his descendants; and though there were nothing else to cause it, such is sin's malignity, that Adam's first transgression would be sufficient to account for all the deaths that have ever been. But "as through the offence of one many died, so much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

And as that first transgression shall not have outwrought its full effects nor developed all its malignity till the last of our doomed species has gasped in mortal agony, and wrestled out the great death-struggle—till the last grave has been closed, and the last orphan has put the weeds of mourning on—so the riches of Christ's righteousness and the extent of Christ's resurrection shall not be demonstrated till every grave is open, and the sea has given up its dead; and pointing to a multitude whom no man can number, out of every kindred and nation—sons from the east and the west, from Africa and either Indies, from the snowy Alp and from the burning zone, with every feature merged in resemblance to His own glorious body —the Second Adam exclaims to the Father, "Here am I and the children whom Thou hast given me."

3. Christ rose a specimen of what His risen people shall be.

It would be interesting to know what man was like in the primeval paradise: what he was like when still sinless and unfallen. But for this we have few data; and with this we have not much to do. It is more important for us to know what man shall be like in his glorified body, and in the paradise restored; and for our conjectures here we have surer ground and more abundant materials. As regards the mode of His existence, an attentive reader may perceive a striking difference between Jesus not yet crucified, and the same Jesus risen. For many years He had been found in fashion as a man, and except on a few rare emergencies—as when He walked on the sea, and extricated Himself from the mob at Nazareth—He did

nothing to evince Him aught else than "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." He hungered, He thirsted, He ate, He drank, He sought the refreshment of sleep, and when He exchanged one place for another, He footed all the intermediate space, and was sometimes weary with the journey. But after His resurrection there was a wonderful change. To show disciples that it was still a true body which He wore, we find Him twice partaking of ordinary food; but of His place of abode, of His lodging or resting anywhere, we have not the slightest hint; and all unlike those previous years, when every movement was minutely known, and every day's employments could be exactly recorded, the usual avocations of these forty days were utterly unknown. In what earthly home He sojourned, no disciple guessed, and how He was occupied, none presumed to ask. Except the walk to Emmaus, there were no more journeys with the Master in the midst; and though He was in Galilee and Jerusalem by turns, no one saw Him traversing the distance between. In the garden He accosts Mary Magdalene, and anon He intercepts her companions still hasting towards the city. At Emmaus, the two disciples recognise Him, but before they can follow up their delightful discovery, He again has vanished from their view; and that same evening the ten are assembled, and the door is firmly fastened: there is no footfall on the stair: the latch is not lifted: the bolt does not fly back, but Jesus is in the midst, saying, "Peace be unto you." The truth is, our earth was no longer "His local residence. He had become the inhabitant of another region, from which He occasionally came

to visit His disciples, till at last He took a visible departure, in order that they might cease to expect Him till the restitution of all things."[1] The body which had been sown in dishonour was now raised in glory. It had been sown a natural body, but was now raised a spiritual body. It was amaranthine—immortal—a body which, once dead, could die no more—a materialism which no longer shrouded so closely the indwelling Godhead: a body which had already been within the veil, and which shed around it the calm and sanctity imported from the holy place—a body which made the upper chamber a Tabor, and the forty days a perpetual Transfiguration—a body which stone walls could not exclude, and which the earth's gravitation could not detain—a body which could easily elude their observation; which was at once so identical that it could be infallibly recognised as that same Jesus, and withal so much fairer than the sons of men, that at first some of the five hundred doubted if it were really Himself. Without any studious reserve on His side, no wonder that there was now a felt remoteness on the side of disciples; and with its texture so fine and so emissive of the glory within, when the Wearer of this glorious humanity presented Himself on the Hill of Galilee, or beside the Lake of Tiberias, or in the upper room of the city, or finally left them on the skirts of Olivet, no wonder that the impulse was always the same, and that those who in other days were free to talk with the Master, now felt constrained to fall at His feet, and worship their God.

[1] For the full discussion of this interesting subject, see Horsley's remarkable *Sermons on Our Lord's Resurrection.*

Something like this shall the risen Christian be. He knows not what he shall be, but he knows that when Christ appears, he shall be like Him. He looks for the Saviour, who shall change his vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. And as he has borne the image of the earthly Adam, he expects to bear the image of the heavenly. Without being able to go into every detail, he has obtained glimpses enough of a risen Redeemer during these forty days, to know that the corporeity he shall hereafter wear will have many forms and many exemptions at present unknown. It will be able to exchange one place for another with vast rapidity and without fatigue. It will be able to frequent scenes and enter places from which it is at present debarred. Like Jesus in the Upper Room, who perhaps had long been present before He was perceived, and who did not necessarily withdraw the instant He ceased to be seen, it may require a miracle to make itself palpable to flesh and blood; but its ordinary avocations and its familiar associates must be such as it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. And like Christ's glorified body, it will hunger no more, neither thirst any more, and in the land where it dwells, the inhabitant "shall no more say, I am sick."

4. Christ rose as a conqueror to commence a new dominion. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death." Nor will the end come till He has conquered back the empire of the universe to the Godhead. "Then cometh

the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." That reign is begun. That conquest is now proceeding. The Mediator is on the throne. He has received all power in Heaven and on Earth. His people are as safe as the subjects can be of One whose dominion ruleth over all. Nor will this mighty One put up His sword or stay His career of victory till all the universe is loyal, or all that is disloyal is disarmed; till moral evil has disappeared from the sight of a holy creation, banished to its own place; and having put down all opposing authority and power, Messiah can hand back to the Father His completed commission—as the Son and the Sent of the Father doing homage to absolute Deity, "that God may be all in all."[1]

A Saviour's resurrection is too seldom the subject of our thoughts. Even those who are "often at Gethsemane" too seldom go out as far as unto Bethany, and gaze up into Heaven along the track of an ascending Redeemer. Even those who sometimes look forth to Christ on the Cross, too seldom look up to Christ on the Throne. But if Jesus was delivered for our offences, He was raised again for our justification: and if we would lead an elastic, hopeful, and improving life, we must remember our Saviour as risen and reigning, and destined to come again.

To one great sorrow, especially, is Christ's resurrection the surest antidote. "O death, where is thy sting? O

[1] 1 Cor. xv.

grave, where is thy victory?" Death has a sting. It is a very dreadful evil. It is dismal to endure, and scarcely less dismal to anticipate. To lie down in pain, perhaps in racking agony: to count the slow-creeping minutes, and wish for evening dusk or morning dawn, which does arrive, but brings no balm of sleep, no sense of betterness: to grow confused, but still conscious of misery: to have wishes that cannot be understood, and words we cannot utter: to see dear ones fading into the distance, and to be able to exchange no more love's wonted tokens, not even a twinkle of the eye nor a murmur of the voice: to feel the breath stifling and the heart-strings breaking, and to be left alone in the midst of this cold and dreary mystery:—what can be more awful, unless it be his case who is the helpless looker-on; who watches pangs which he cannot assuage, and imploring looks which he cannot interpret; who plies cordials at which the King of Terrors mocks, and who importunes science for miracles which it cannot work; who in frantic desperation would detain the spirit which has already burst its earthly fetters, and, more frantic still, refuses to believe that the gulf is already crossed, and that the form which he enclasps is no longer a father or a mother, but only senseless clay; who must see these dear familiar features grow so ghastly, and then learn to love them in this new and mournful phasis, only to endure another woe when the coffin-lid is closed, and the funeral pomp sets forth, and from the macerating leaves and plashy turf of the churchyard the survivor comes back to the forsaken dwelling, and up-

braids himself that he should sit under the bright lamp, and before the blazing fire, while, beneath the bleak November night, that dear form is left to silence and to solitude. Death has a sting. There is often a pang in its very prospect. You are well and happy; but the thought crosses you, "I must soon work my last day's work, or play out my last holiday. Soon must I take my last look of summer, and spend my last evening with my friends. Soon must I be done with these pleasant books, and put the marker in where it will never again be moved. Soon must I vanish from these dear haunts, and this most beautiful world; and soon must I go down to the house of silence, and say to the worm, 'Thou art my sister.' And yet, soon as that may be, still sooner may precious ones be taken, and force me to say, 'I would not live always.'" Whether in the actual endurance or in the awful anticipation, death is very dreadful, and it used to have a sting which not only slew the victim, but extinguished the survivor's hope. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ. Thanks that there is one tomb which has already lost its tenant, and thanks for the news of how that happened. Thanks that the old penalty is now exhausted in the sinner's Substitute, and that whatever great stone be placed on our sepulchre, there need be no gravestone of guilt on the immortal soul. Thanks, O Father, for Thy gift unspeakable; thanks, O Saviour, for Thy love unfathomable. Thanks for tasting death for every man. Thanks for Thy glorious resurrection and beneficent reign. Thanks for Thy gracious promise to destroy

the last enemy; and thanks, O Holy Spirit, the Comforter, for those to whom Thou hast given such union to Jesus that they feel as if they could never die—nay, that to depart and be with Christ is far better. "O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

To get the full benefit of these assurances, the reader is earnestly exhorted to keep in memory his high calling and the Author of his better life. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Prize and use for its proper purposes the Lord's day. As sacred but far more touching than the world's primeval Sabbath, let its chiming minstrelsy ever remind you, "Christ is risen," and seek to catch the suggestions of things not seen as yet which it wafts from the hills of Immortality. And sorrow not as those who have no hope concerning friends who sleep in Jesus. Considering that we "believe in the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life Everlasting," there is reason to apprehend that our whole feeling in this country regarding our departed friends is too funereal; and on behalf of England we have sometimes envied the brighter hope—the look of Easter morning, which seems to linger still in Luther's land. With its emblems suggestive of Resurrection and Heaven, its churchyard is not a Pagan burial-ground, but the place where believers sleep,—a true

cemetery, to which friendship can find it pleasant to repair and meditate. At the obsequies of Christian brethren it is not a funeral knell which strikes slowly and sternly; but from the village steeple there sheds a soft and almost cheerful requiem: and though there may be many wet eyes in the procession, there are not many of the artificial insignia of woe, as the whole parish convoys the departed to his "bed of peaceful rest." Once in the Black Forest we accompanied to the "Place of Peace" an old man's funeral, and there still dwells in our ear the quaint and kindly melody which the parishioners sang along the road; and we have sometimes wished that we could hear the like in our own land, with its sombre and silent obsequies.

Neighbour, accept our parting song;
The road is short, the rest is long:
The Lord brought here, the Lord takes hence,—
This is no house of permanence.

On bread of mirth and bread of tears
The pilgrim fed these chequer'd years;
Now, landlord world, shut to the door,
Thy guest is gone for evermore.

—Gone to a realm of sweet repose,
His comrades bless him as he goes:
Of toil and moil the day was full,
A good sleep now,—the night is cool.

Ye village bells, ring, softly ring,
And in the blessed Sabbath bring,
Which from this weary work-day tryst
Awaits God's folk through Jesus Christ.

And open wide, thou Gate of Peace,
And let this other journey cease,
Nor grudge a narrow couch, dear neighbours,
For slumbers won by life-long labours.

Beneath these sods how close ye lie!
But many a mansion 's in yon sky ;
Ev'n now, beneath the sapphire throne,
Is his prepared through God's dear Son.

" I quickly come," that Saviour cries ;
Yea, quickly come, this churchyard sighs
Come, Jesus, come, we wait for thee,—
Thine now and ever let us be.

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